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IMAGINATION

STORIES OF SCIENCE AND FANTASY

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THE ENCHANTED CRUSADE by Geoff St. Reynard

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Introducing the



A U T H O R

Rog Phillips

★

THE picture of the obviously unrepentant ax murderer you see on this page is of me. I tried to look intelligent just for you, gentle reader, but it's no use. My usual expression is one of extreme despondency, and it gives me trouble. In cafes where I sometimes go to think up stories the waitresses think I'm contemplating suicide. When I explain I'm thinking up a new story I can't go back there to think again. Sometimes even my wife (Mari Wolf) thinks my thoughtful expression means I'm mad at her.

Policemen are nice to me. Once in a nightclub where I objected to the tab the bouncer called two assistants from the kitchen, then decided to let me have my way, all without a struggle. I look tough and have a six foot two frame to back up my looks. The last thing

I look like is an author.

And that's the last thing I became — if you concede the point that I am an author. That was seven years ago. I would probably have become one before that, but it didn't occur to me to try it. I had the feeling that most people have who read a lot but have never met a writer; that a writer is a nebulous figure like a god somewhere beyond the far horizon where he can't be contacted by mortals. If I thought of it at all I probably thought I couldn't write. I still think so.

My birthplace was Spokane, Washington. I went to various schools in such places as Spokane, Los Angeles, Kingfisher, Oklahoma, Milwaukee, and Seattle. I've worked at such things as farm labor, carpentry, plumbing, machine shop,

IMAGINATION

*Stories
of Science
and Fantasy*

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Front cover painting by W. E. Terry, illustrating a scene from THE ENCHANTED CRUSADE. Interior illustrations by W. E. Terry, and H. W. McCauley. Astronomical photo, back cover, courtesy Yerkes Observatory. Printed in USA by Stephens Printing Corp., Sandusky, Ohio.

The S Editorial

HERE is much conjecture about space flight these days. You read about it in the papers, and in particular, slick magazines (with millions of readers) such as *Collier's* and *Time* have been devoting considerable space to the subject. We wonder why.

ARTICLES are supposed to be factual, and certainly discussions held under the public scrutiny must have something besides imagination to back them up. And yet, we don't have space flight. That's why we wonder what all the fuss is about. Space flight (up until now) has been the stock-in-trade of science fiction magazines. Is it simply that science fiction suddenly appeals to the general public, and mass circulation magazine editors are exploiting this "new" literary bonanza? Or is it possible that behind-the-scenes experimentation by "top secret" projects has made an improbable subject a near-established fact? We're inclined to suspect the latter may hit very close to the mark.

WHY all the conjecture then? One answer could be an "educational program." It might be high time to get the people used to the idea of space flight before the big event takes place. True, for as many discussions proving its feasibility, there are critical rebuttals. The point is, the talk goes on, publicly, by big names in the world of science. Dr. Wernher von Braun in partic-

ular has had much to say. His critics have been numerous, and of scientific renown. Dr. von Braun's reply to his critics is simply that there is a limit to what can be publicly said.

THIS cryptic observation leaves much unsaid but at the same time reveals even more. The implication is that much more can be said because of what has and is being done. One might safely assume then that space flight is not only just around the corner, but perhaps a few preliminary peeks have already been taken.

AS an interesting sidelight on this subject we wonder if the deep interest in space flight is not partially a result of the *flying saucers*. Faced with the actuality of these atmospheric will-o-the-wisps, perhaps our government has decided it's high time to breach the walls of space as long as some extra-terrestrials have shown it can be done.

SO maybe the *flying saucers* are part of our own hush-hush technology? Possible, yes. But we don't think so. Mainly because the saucers are generally credited by reliable observers to travel with incredible swiftness — soundlessly. Man has been developing many sources of power, but all of it is accompanied by an equal amount of noise. We have a hunch the "soundless" power plant is a bit beyond our present ken. But we'll discover the secret

eventually; either through trial and error—or by following a *saucer* to its source. That would be a real science fiction story for the papers!

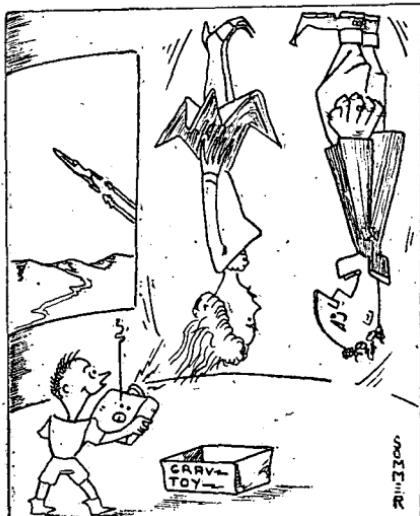
BETWEEN now and Labor Day you're going to read a lot in IMAGINATION about the coming 11th Annual World Science Fiction Convention. We've promised the Convention Committee that we'd keep you up to date on the plans for that great occasion. You'll want to know about it because you should plan on being there. Where? Philadelphia, the Bellevue Stratford Hotel! When? September 5-6-7. Why? Because you'll have the most enjoyable time of your life, *living* science fiction for three great days. If you have a favorite author you'll meet him there—along with editors, artists and fans. You'll make new friends, with people who talk your language. You'll be entertained with a lavish program highlighted by the traditional Grand Banquet. So what do you do now? Send for your honorary membership today—one dollar to 11th World S-F Convention, P. O. Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Pa. You'll receive all the bulletins direct from the Convention committee.

THE committee will be happy to answer any questions you may have, and assist you in securing all-important hotel reservations. Hundreds of excellent accommodations are available, we understand, at very reasonable rates. So make a point of sending your dollar today. It's the smallest investment toward the biggest buy you'll ever make.

PAGE 161 has a feature of special importance this month. You will find there the announcement of IMAGINATION'S first annual sci-

ence fiction radio citation. This marks a great step forward in the promotion of science fiction, connecting for the first time two great science fiction media, radio and magazines. The CBS network received IMAGINATION's 1952 Award presented over a nation-wide hookup, December 20th. Thus, a great institution in science fiction is born.

JUST a year ago IMAGINATION introduced a new writer to the field, Daniel F. Galouye. We predicted great things for Dan at that time, and we're happy to say that one short year has seen Dan rise to the top rank of writers. We're marking the occasion next issue by presenting a new Galouye novel, THE FIST OF SHIVA. It's a great story you won't want to miss, so get to your newsstand promptly March 17th.—And look for the most striking cover Madge has ever presented. It's a McCauley painting nothing short of sensational. See you next month wh



"Educational or not—it's got to go!"



Saracen blades held no fear for Godwin; but now he faced Mufaddal's sorcery with the fate of the beautiful Ramizail—and England—resting upon

The Enchanted Crusade

By

Geoff St. Reynard



IMAGINATION

JUST as daybreak burst over the rim of the desert, the dying man heard the crunch of horses' hooves on sand. He lifted his head and croaked as loudly as collapsing lungs would let him, saying thrice over, "In the name of God, help!" Then he pitched on his nose again and lay still, unable to move so much as an eyelash.

There was the grit of sand under the light tread of men, and a voice said, "Name of all camels! What a collection of vulture-victuals this one is!"

"I doubt it was he cried out," said another voice. "He must have been dead for a decade." This voice then rendered a belch of classic proportions. "Damn those figs," it said.

"If you will eat three pounds at a breakfast, Godwin love," said a throaty feminine voice, all full of honey and laughter, "you must expect some few repercussions."

The dying man collected his will and the scraps of strength that were left in his tortured body, and shoving at the sand with one arm managed to roll over on his back. The horizon-cleared sun lanced sickeningly across his eyeballs, adding one more pain to the thousand which beset him. Three vague dark shapes bent above him.

"By the very God, he lives! Give him a drink."

Water, cool and terrible and yet incredibly wondrous to lips and blackened gums that had tasted nothing save blood for what must

surely be centuries, dribbled down across his cheeks, ran into his mouth, reached through his rasped throat for his belly. He gurgled and thought he was drowning, and it seemed a splendid death.

But he had something to say, something of such importance that it had dragged him across this endless waste of hellish sand long after a missionless man would have given up and died. He recollect ed the message and blinked his nearly sightless eyes once or twice, and made futile little motions toward a sitting position. A brawny arm at his back tilted him upright. "Easy, man. You're all but dead. Don't strive so. Die easily."

"Godwin, you're a born diplomat," said the woman's voice. "Why don't you come right out and tell him he looks like two coppers' worth of dogmeat?"

"Well, he does," Godwin said grimly. "No sense in lying to a chap who's about to give up the spirit, Ramizail. No real man wants that."

"Listen," croaked the dying one. "Who are you?"

"Three adventurers," said the voice that had sworn by the very God. It was an elderly voice but full of vigor. "Three homeless travelers pledged to right wrongs and defeat hell's minions wherever they may be found."

"Thanks to the Holy Sepulcher," groaned the dying one. "Perhaps all may be well."

The man holding him up jerked

with surprise. "Here," he said, with a kind of tender roughness, "are you a Crusader, man? Are you a Frank?"

"English," said he. "Sir Malcolm du Findley." He made a hideous rattling noise but from somewhere deep in his soul the power came to make him go on. "El Iskandariya. Big ship. Full of rats."

"What's he burbling about?" asked the deep voice of Godwin. "Poor devil's clean out of his head. Rats? Did rats do this to him?"

"Rats are full of plague," said Sir Malcolm faintly.

"Yes, yes," said the girl. "Ship full of rats, rats full of plague. Go on."

"Can a rat have the plague?" asked Godwin.

"Well, can it?" asked the girl. "Mihrjan, answer me."

A fourth voice, one like muted thunder over distant dunes, said, "Assuredly, O Mistress of My Life, though 'tis not known generally by men in this time."

"He knows it, evidently," said the girl. "Do go on, Sir Malcolm. What about these rats?"

"Ship at El Iskandariya. Going to England, spread plague, decimate whole country. No more Crusades. Saracen plot."

"Now by God and by God, no Saracen stoops that low!" shouted the elderly man.

"Yes. Whole crew of them. Leader—"

"Yes, man; the leader?" urged Godwin.

"Mufaddal al Mamun. Big black-faced swine. His gang can do—anything. Say they can wipe out nine-tenths of England with plague rats, then France, Germany. No more Crusades." He widened his bloody-veined eyes and retching; said, "Tell Richard! Get word to Richard! Got to sink that ship, slay Mufaddal al Mamún! Slay his sorcerers! Promise!"

"We promise," said Godwin. "Decimate England, eh? Plague-infested rats, ha? My halidom! I think not!"

Sir Malcolm, with a grimace that might have been a grin, collapsed in upon himself and died, as peacefully as a man can when he has come seventy miles on foot, over baking sand beneath a searing sun of brass, with a third of his skin flayed off

CHAPTER II

GODWIN stood up. "Where's El Iskandariya?" he asked.

El Sareuk rubbed his beard with one slim brown hand. "You call it Alexandria. About twenty-five leagues west it lies, my great-thewed friend, on the banks of the Mediterranean."

The Lord Mohammed El Sareuk was a man of sixty, slightly built, fanatic-faced, whose body always seemed on the point of disintegrating from sheer concentration of energy. His boots were of red Cordovan leather worked with gold thread; his clothing was blue silk and rose samite, topped by the green

turban of a Hadji; under the soft robes he wore gold-washed Turkish light armor; and over the whole outfit a black Bedouin burnous. He was weaponed well: from his girdle hung a Damascus steel scimitar, and a beautiful gold-etched steel knife with a silver hilt and a ruby in the pommel. Once this man had led a great *harka* in the forces of Saladin; but love of Godwin had turned him to a rover, an adventurer who called no tent his own and no man his peer save the tall young Englishman he now addressed.

"What is it, Godwin? Twenty-five leagues to Alexandria, or eighty-odd to Richard the Lion Heart in Jaffa?"

The girl spoke before Godwin could answer. "Oh, heavens, uncle 'tis the twenty-five to the plague ship, without a doubt, because what would Godwin want with a thousand Crusaders at his back when he can wade in single-handed against an unknown number of enemies and grab the glory all for himself? An Englishman won't fight if he can't fight against odds, after all. Need you ask such a silly question?"

The girl, now: as tall and lovely a piece as ever came from the union of a crusading British knight and a Saracen lass who traced descent from Solomon. Her eyes were violet, pure clear liquid violet such as is seen once in a thousand years; her lips were sensuous, full and red; her hair was a rainbow-flashing mass of ink-black curls. Of her complexion nothing derogatory could be

said, and of her full-breasted figure even less. She wore copper and cream-colored robes of as fine and yet tough silk as you might find anywhere in the world of 1191, with a black turban to which she managed to give a jaunty and most un-Moslem-like air. Once this girl had been a sorceress, and controlled the entire tribe of djinn by virtue of a golden sigil and ring bequeathed her by her mother; her home and heritage and much of her power she had given up, to be a nomad and traipse about the world, all for love of Godwin.

This Godwin said now, "Ye gods! How can there be any question of Alexandria or Jaffa?" He held up a big hard hand and ticked off points on his fingers. "One: Dick, or Richard the Lion Nose, or whatever the hell they call him, thinks I'm a madman. If I took him a tale of rats with plague being shipped to England, he'd have me locked up for an idiot, and I can hardly blame him. Two: it's a good eighty-five leagues to Jaffa, and then more than a hundred from there back to Alexandria, eating up God knows how many days, the way the Franks travel. We three can do it from here in two days' time. There are decent people in Alexandria who'll fight with us against any such hellish scheme, surely. El Sareuk is a Hadji and has a certain reputation. Can't you command help from the Arabs, old wolf?"

"I can. He has the right of it, my dear."

"Well, at least we can have Mihrjan's djinn transport us there in comfort, and aid us in the squelching of this silly plot of Mufaddal's," said the girl, wiping sweat off her patrician nose.

GODWIN frowned. He tugged at his beard. "My dear, you know my sentiments about the djinn. It's not knightly to use their supernatural powers when all one's fighting is a pack of mortals. Besides, it takes the fun out of adventuring. If a man can cry up a legion of ten-foot bogies to do his bidding, how can he call himself a gentleman rover? No, we'll not employ Mihrjan. Not that I have anything against you, Mihrjan," he added hastily.

A voice from the air beside them said, like an enormous drum finding speech in its depths, "O Lord of Ten Thousand, I esteem thy principles without flaw. Truly thou art a man among men, and would be a djinni amongst djinn!"

"Oh, pooh," said the girl, Ramizail. "If I hadn't given you the ring in a rash moment of affection, Godwin, I'd lock it to the sigil and wish you home in England this minute, you hulking wonderful stupid baby."

Invisible Mihrjan chuckled, but made no other comment. Godwin said, "Let's mount and ride. The horses are fresh and even over this abominable sand we ought to make a good distance before sundown."

"What of Sir Malcolm?" asked

Ramizail.

"What of him?" said Godwin. "I've laid him out properly. A Crusader doesn't expect to be buried when there's work afoot. Come on, to horse!" He went racing to his great Spanish charger and vaulted into the saddle from behind, a trick left over from his Crusading days, when he could do it in full weight of battle armor.

And this Godwin, what of him? A man of thirty-one hard winters and thirty-one baking summers that had leathered his skin and steeled his sinews, while leaving his spirit boyish and irrepressible. A tiger-muscled, blue-fire-eyed, yellow-bearded man, quick to rage, quick to forgiveness, quick to gorge food and drink and quick to go hungry when needs must. A man educated to horse and hound and every weapon, bred to the saddle and the brawl, reckless and headstrong, generous and full of brag and bounce. A man of six feet and four inches, weighing sixteen stone, with scarce a thought in his handsome head but of war and hunting and being a gentleman according to his lights, of loving Ramizail and trotting happily over the world righting wrongs and murdering villains and being Godwin, Godwin of England.

And there was more to the man than all this, too, for had he not been till this early winter of 1191 the King of England?

It mattered little now, for Godwin was Godwin and no more. Not

that that was not quite enough! thought Ramizail, resignedly mounting her bay palfrey. Sometimes it was a vast deal too much. She cast a glance of affection at her affianced. She shook her lovely head. What a man!

CHAPTER III

MUFADDAL al Mamun, a tall, bulky, brown-eyed, flat-nosed, dark-faced hulk of a man, was eating his midday meal. It consisted of *ful* beans fried in *samn*, millet bread, onions, cucumbers, and hard-boiled eggs, washed down with quarts of strong *buzah*, beer brewed from fermented bread. It was a poor man's meal, but Mufaddal preferred to eat the cheapest of foods, for he thought that it made him appear fanatical and single-minded and self-sacrificing to his followers. As a matter of fact, they merely thought him a tasteless slob. He held the same warped opinion about his garments, and clad himself daily in a gray *gallabiyyah*, the gown-like dress of the fellahin, with long loose cotton pants and a soiled green skullcap. His cohorts made jokes about it and regarded him with distaste, for many of them were proud Turks and high-blooded Bedouins, who took a ferocious pride in garbing themselves as well as possible and eating the best provender available. They followed him, however, because he was a wild terrible fighter, because he was half-brother to three potent sorcerers,

and because he could think up much dirtier plots against the infidel hordes of the Crusaders than any other Saracen alive.

As he popped the last egg whole into his broad gash of a mouth, and smashed it between great yellow snaggleteeth, wishing it were the skull of Richard Coeur de Lion, one of his sorcerers came sliding in the door. There was a cool wind blowing through the house from the sea, which lay not more than thirty yards from its portals; but the sorcerer's presence seemed to heat the breeze and taint it with the stench of sulphur and brimstone. Mufaddal looked even more irritable than usual.

"What do you want, offspring of a leprous unwed camel?"

"May you live a thousand years, Mufaddal, my brother."

"This is a noble sentiment. Did you interrupt my eating—that is to say, my meditation—to wish me long life, imbecile?"

The sorcerer looked meditatively at his left forefinger, which turned into a blue snake and hissed at the big dirty man across the laden cloth. Mufaddal jumped and said hastily, "This, of course, is only my rough manner of speaking, Heraj, and naturally you know you are my favorite brother and may come in any time you like."

"Yes. Well, I was going to say, Mufaddal, that complications are lifting their ugly heads in this business of the plague ship."

"What? Are the rats not loaded

into the hold; and the job accomplished with but seventeen fellahin bitten? Did we not slay the seventeen before they could come near anyone? And is the ship not as sound as any ship that sails the Mediterranean, having new sails and a new mast, and her belly caulked no later than last month?"

"Ah, very true," agreed Heraj.

"Does every rat not carry at least one flea, cleverly infected with the plague by your own subtle methods?"

"Fleas and rats are as deadly as any Saracen blade, and the grisly death they carry will spread far and wide when they are let off the ship on the coasts of England."

"And lastly, is all not in readiness to sail come the day after tomorrow?"

"True," said Heraj gloomily. "But we can't send it out before then, as our chosen crew will not be assembled till that morning, especially the far-experienced Nubian slave who is coming from Tripoli to guide the ship on its perilous course; and by the wrath of Eblis, you and I may not live to see the dawn of that day, near though you deem it!"

"What are you talking about?" roared Mufaddal.

"I just had a message from a friend who happens to be a hawk in his present incarnation. He tells me that Godwin is coming."

"This is terrible news indeed," said Mufaddal, fiercely mimicking the sorcerer's worried tones. "I

quake with fright. I throw myself on the infinite mercy of Allah." He rose and flexed his arms, that were each as thick as a youth's body. "Heraj, who in the name of the seven hells is Godwin?"

"You may well ask," said Heraj, even more gloomily than before. "Nobody seems to know exactly. I can't get a line on his history before a month ago, when he rode out of Jaffa in company with a renegade Saracen chieftain called El Sareuk and a girl named Ramizail. But he's a brawny young champion, whatever his antecedents, and his girl controls the djinn."

MUFADDAL sat down on the floor with vast violence. His dark face turned purple. His yellow teeth showed in a grin of sudden terror. "I betake me to Allah! That Ramizail?"

"Yes, that one. Well, this hawk says—"

"Can you understand the hawk tongue?"

"This one speaks Arabic. He's a fairly talented fellow, for a hawk. He says that Godwin and the others are pledged to go rampaging over the earth, righting wrongs, and they've heard of the plague ship and are on their way to destroy it. And us, I suppose," added Heraj.

"Name of forty goats," said Mufaddal worriedly. "I fear not this Godwin, but the djinn . . ." He stared up at the sorcerer. "Can't you do something to stop them? You and Pepi and Habu?"

"What? You know my limitations, and I'm the strongest of the three. I can do a lot, Mufaddal, but I can't combat djinn. The chief of them, Mihrjan, even travels with this Ramizail wench, personally. She controls him and his race by a sigil and ring that came down to her from Solomon."

"Curse it, Heraj, if this ship doesn't sail, England will continue to send Crusaders to the East until they have conquered every inch of desert and city! It's got to sail! How did these loathsome adventurers hear of it?"

"They happened across that Englishman who escaped us, Sir Malcolm du Findley. The one that we started to flay last Thursday, before he crawled out a window and treacherously disappeared."

Mufaddal got off the floor. He hitched up his pants and retied the string that held them around his muscular waist. "Heraj," he said grimly, "I give you an hour to think of some way to stop them. Djinn or no djinn, that ship sails!"

CHAPTER IV

BY evening they had covered more than half the distance to Alexandria, and Godwin was persuaded to halt for a few hours of rest, the horses being weary with plunging through sand for such a long spell. "We'll ride again with the moon's zenith," said Godwin, as he went about picketing the horses. "Perhaps we can make the city by mid-

day tomorrow."

Ramizail went off and stood by herself. "Mihrjan," she said softly.

"I am here, Beloved of Allah."

"Mihrjan, I'm sick of the same dreary food day after day. Godwin maintains that gentlemen rovers should fare roughly, to toughen their bodies. But I'm not a gentleman."

"Assuredly thou art not," said the invisible djinni, respect and male admiration nicely blended in his great voice.

"Then spread me a real feast! I want *couscous*, with almond stuffing, and wild rice, and some lemon juice, and certainly some white bread."

"Thy will is sweet, Mistress."

"Then oranges, and *asida*, and sugar. And about three gallons of sherbet. And Mihrjan, do you remember the time you brought me that confection out of a far time? The one you called silk chocolate?"

"Milk-chocolate, O Daughter of All Delights."

"Bring me some of that, too. Put the meal on a damask cloth, with blue gauze to wipe the mouth, and the vessels must all be of purest crystal with gold rims."

"To hear is to obey, Little Queen of My Tribe."

"Be sure there's plenty for all of us, with a bowl of mice for Godwin's falcon Yellow-eyes, and remember that my lord and master eats like two-thirds of a regiment."

"Give me but four minutes, Mistress, and you shall see it spread be-

neath the trees of this oasis, beside the clear spring that bubbles through the sand."

She strolled back to her uncle and her betrothed, a secret smile on her lips. In the specified four minutes a banquet popped into sight just beside them. Godwin jumped.

"What the devil!"

"I'm hungry," said Ramizail, at once on the defensive.

"Mihrjan!" said Godwin, glaring at her. "You had him do this. How often must I tell you my sentiments concerning all this magic, witch-wench?"

"Never again, Godwin dear, for I know them by heart."

"Ramizail," he said angrily, his eyes sparkling blue, "this is going to stop here and now. When you gave me the ring, and thus shared your power over the djinn with me, you promised not to command Mihrjan to do anything I didn't approve of."

"Oh, well," grumbled the girl, "I'm hungry for real food!"

"Ramizail, give me the sigil!"

Her eyes blazed back at his. "Come and take it, you big oaf!"

El Sareuk leaned against a date palm and smiled to himself. It was always a toss-up as to which of these iron-willed people would win an argument. Godwin strode over to the girl, upsetting a goblet of pale pink sherbet with his foot, and took her by the shoulders. She hit him on the nose. He turned her over and smacked her on her lightly-clad bottom. She screeched and bit his leg. He dropped her on the

sand and sat on her.

Mihrjan, invisible but no more than three feet from them, laughed deeply.

El Sareuk said to Yellow-eyes, the old peregrine falcon, who was sitting on his shoulder watching the brawl, "Thy master has met, if not his match, at least a very worthy foe!"

GODWIN, after a great deal of fumbling, got hold of the sigil where it hung on a chain round her neck, and opened the clasp and took it off.

"Bully!" shrieked Ramizail. "Swaggaering, bragging, girl-defeating bully! Give me that back!"

"Not a chance," said Godwin equably. He moved over and sat in the small of her back. He locked the sigil into the ring he wore on his little finger, and the designs of each caught the other and made a single lump of gold. "Now," he said, "I control the djinn."

"Have them transport me to the Isles of the Western Sea," said the girl savagely, "or by the Crescent and Cross, Godwin, I'll murder you when I get up!"

"Nothing so drastic. Mihrjan!"

"Yes, Lord?"

"I control you now absolutely, don't I?"

"Yes, Lord."

"You follow us for love, I know, but we can't really command you unless one of us holds both these baubles, isn't that so?"

"'Tis so, one of a Hundred Mon-

archs; though thou knowest I would answer any summons thou or my mistress made, Solomon's Seal or no. But the sigil and ring are life's and death's powers over me."

"Well, Mihrjan, you know my sentiments about the whole business, and by the mass, I'm growing weary of these tricks of hers. She's always having you save me when there's no need, and stepping in when I have a chance at a fight, and making banquets, and showing off your magic as if it were her own. So I want you to go away, Mihrjan."

"Lord?" said the djinn, disturbed and bewildered.

"Well, look, hang it all, I like you, I think you're a splendid chap, really, but this magic gets on my nerves. Now go on away, go besiege a castle, or throw an oyster fry, or take a wife, or something. We have the sigil and ring if we really need you, old fellow, but meantime please do go home. I'm sick of this soft living Ramizail forces on me by your thaumaturgy."

The djinni chuckled. "I see thy point, O King. I go. Remember that the Seal calls me to you in an eye's winking if need arises."

"It'll probably arise, if I know my luck, but I hope it won't. Goodbye, old fellow."

"Farewell, Master. Fare thee well, Moon of Incredible Beauty." There was a swishing noise, a faint scent of attar touched their nostrils, and the air rushed into a sudden-

made vacuum beside them. The Moon of Incredible Beauty said ferociously, "If you don't let me up, you son of a jackal, I'll bite you in a vulnerable spot and you won't sit down for a week."

Godwin stood up. Ramizail rolled over and eyed him. There was malice in the gaze, but Godwin only laughed. He tossed her the sigil. She hung it round her neck.

"I'll hide the ring, kitten, so you can't steal it when I'm asleep. Now you're a plain woman, and by our lady, you'll stay that way!"

"What about the banquet?" said she. "I'm surprised you didn't have him take it back."

"Ah well, a man does now and again grow tired of figs and biscuits and water. We'll eat it. Just this once."

They all sat down, El Sareuk gave thanks to Allah and Godwin to his deity for the sumptuous repast, and they fell to. Yellow-eyes dipped her scarred, notched beak into her bowl of plump mice, and emitted a cry of pleasure. Everybody ate until four bellies well nigh burst with good food. Then they rolled up in their rugs and went to sleep.

CHAPTER V

HERAJ looked into his crystal ball. Absently he flung out his right arm, which extended for seven feet and allowed the hand to grasp a beaker of honey wine sitting on a taboret across the room.

His eyes lit up greenly at what

he saw in the ball. He tossed off the wine and hared out of his apartments, through the room where fourteen lieutenants of Mufaddal's force were playing at dice, and into his master's sleeping room. Mufaddal sat up from his rugs and howled.

"This damnable lack of privacy must cease! I —" Then he saw what his half-brother was doing casually with his left foot, and subsided. "Yes, Heraj? What is it?"

"Listen, al Mamun. I put a thought in Godwin's head this afternoon — just a suggestion; you know. He followed through beautifully."

"Good. Did he hang himself to a tree?"

"No, no. I suggested he get rid of that djinni. He did. Then he hid Solomon's ring, though where I don't know, and forgot where he hid it."

"By Osman ibn Affar, that was well done! Your power over men's minds astonishes even me, Heraj." The dark-faced fanatic was jubilant.

"I didn't make him forget it, he did that on his own hook. He's cooperative that way. He has a child's intellect." Heraj took a sweetmeat out of his ear and ate it. "Now the djinni's gone, Allah knows where, and won't come back till he's called by the sigil and ring. And they haven't got the ring."

"Oh, my brother," said Mufaddal, rubbing his hands together, "if you have indeed put this Godwin at

our mercy, I shall give you a racing camel with a ruby-studded saddle!"

"I have, I have. But never mind the camel, I want Richard for my personal slave when we defeat the Crusaders."

"Done!" barked the leader. "Now tell me, subtle one, what will you do with Godwin?"

Heraj regarded his fingernails, which turned into ten little pieces of glass, behind which miniature dancing girls performed various interesting contortions. At last he said smugly, "I've done it, Mufaddal. Just wait till that overgrown lout wakes up." He laughed. "What a shock he's got coming!"

CHAPTER VI

GODWIN rolled over, opened an eye, and smacked his lips. He always awoke hungry. He scabbled in the sand beside him until he found his bag of dates, popped one into his mouth, and got up. He pushed a bare toe against the back-side of El Sareuk, who erupted with a startled curse. Yellow-eyes woke at that and screamed, and Ramizail sat up.

"Time to ride, old wolf," said Godwin. He went to the spring and drank deep. Then he walked past it toward the horses.

The horses were not there. He scowled, went through the palm trees, and made as if to set foot on the desert sands beyond.

The desert sands were not there. He fell to his knees. His eyes

snapped wide. Two inches before him the oasis came to an abrupt halt. There was nothing there but vacant space. The desert was gone. Everything was gone.

"What in the name of—"

He bent over the edge of the oasis. A thousand feet below him the desert shimmered coldly in the light of the stars. He could see their horses, the three saddle beasts and the two pack animals, standing in a knot with the Arabian camel they kept for emergencies. The creatures looked like insects, so far below him they were. He drew back with a gasp.

"El Sareuk! Ramizail!" he shouted. "Take care! The oasis has floated off its moorings!"

They came running to his side. Ramizail gave a little cry. "Godwin, darling! What's happened to us?"

"Lord knows. We're marooned up here, it seems." He lay down at full length and peered over the edge again. The oasis had indeed been torn from its base, and the roots of the palms dangled below the round disc of it, waving their filaments in the air. "By the rood," said Godwin, "if this doesn't strain the imagination! Does it happen often, old one?"

"Never to my knowledge before this night," said El Sareuk, running a hand through his grizzled beard. "Now by Allah! The sorcerers of Mufaddal have done this thing!"

"The ring, Godwin," snapped Ramizail. She was all business, and no man would have denied her any-

thing in this sudden gust of her serious intent, for when she put by her humor and her playfulness, she was a force to be reckoned with. "We'll have to call up Mihrjan. None of your vaunted swashbuckling will cope with this ensorcellment."

"Yes, I suppose one must fight witchery with witchery, though it goes against my knightly grain." He made as if to take the ring from his finger. "Oh, I forgot. I hid it from you."

"Stupid ox! Give it here."

He groped in his silk and samite robes, then among the crevices of his gold-washed steel mesh Cairo armor. At last he stared sheepishly at her. "I forget what I did with it."

"Oh, you bumbling Englishman!" She leaped to him and ran swift questing fingers over his body. "It's big enough, it ought to make quite a lump. Ninety-nine names of the true One! It isn't here. Did you hide it in the sand?"

"No," said Godwin, blushing with shame. "I put it where I'd always have it near by. But I can't seem to recollect just where."

She put her hands to her head. "You — you — "

"Never mind," said Godwin. "I have an idea. If it doesn't work, you'll have to pick me up with a spoon, but I think it will."

He squared his broad shoulders and walked straight over the edge of the high-floating oasis.



CHAPTER VII

GODWIN turned and looked back at them. In the moon's light he was an uncanny figure, standing on lofty immaterial nothingness.

"Well," he said testily, "come on. Can't you see it's all right?"

They gaped at him, eyes round as the declining moon. "How are you accomplishing that, comrade?" asked the Saracen.

"Accomplishing what? I'm only standing here."

"Yes, but on air, for the love of Allah! How can you stand on air?"

"I happen," said Godwin, distinctly and loudly, as though he were speaking to an imbecile, "I happen to be standing on the sands of the desert."

"He's mad, my child," groaned El Sareuk.

"If he is, he's doing as neat a job of being crazy as I ever saw," retorted Ramizail. "Does his insanity affect the pull of the earth?"

"Hmm," said the Hadji, "you're right. Well, let me join him in his madness. But if I vanish abruptly, niece, do you go back and sit by that spring until the oasis sinks of its own accord. I would not have your lovely brains splattered over a league of hot sand." He walked gingerly out to Godwin's side. "He's right, it's the desert!" he shouted.

She looked at the two of them, standing there in midair shaking hands solemnly with each other.

She grinned. "Of course, it's a mirage, or a trick!" She went to them, treading on what seemed space, and it turned to solid dunes beneath her sandals. She looked back, and the oasis was there, settled firmly in the heart of the desert, with sleepy Yellow-eyes just flying out of the trees. "A neat stunt," said Ramizail. "Godwin, you're cleverer than I thought, and as brave as forty lions, to have tried such a thing!"

"A man takes his chances," said Godwin modestly.

They mounted and rode off toward the west, toward El Iskandariya and the ship full of rats, rats full of fleas, fleas full of bubonic plague. As they went, Ramizail nagged at Godwin, and Godwin tried unhappily to remember what he had done with the ring of Solomon. But he could not do it. He patted himself all over, and even looked into his Saracen-style helmet, which was a round shining steel cap surmounted by the golden figure of a rampant lion and resting upon a head-piece of soft white cloth that protected his neck from the sun; but he could not discover it. All he remembered was that he had put it in a safe place, a place that would never be farther from him than he could reach.

As the moon touched the faraway dunes, the sun came up. Gilded sands grew fiery beneath the hooves of their animals, and the *khamsin*, that was like the breath of a devil drunk on hot mulled blood, arose to

torture them.

A wide-breasted dune stretched before them. They topped the rise and Ramizail gave a cry, while the men checked their steeds and glanced at each other. "Another illusion?" asked Godwin.

"Who can tell? There are more beasts in the desert than are known to man," shrugged El Sareuk.

In the hollow formed by four dunes' meeting stood an enormous lion, all orange-red of hue, facing them with black mane bristling up like the spines of a porcupine. The odd thing about it, the thing that made it seem somewhat out of the ordinary even to men who had looked on a thousand wonders in their time, was the pair of broad silver wings that sprang from its shoulder blades and spread themselves high to left and right.

"Winged lion," said Ramizail. "No, I cannot call it to mind. I doubt one's been seen before, at least in Egypt."

THE lion growled, crouched, and launched itself through the air straight at Godwin's head. El Sareuk shouted, "Allah defend us!" and leaned over in the saddle to slash at it with his scimitar; while Godwin hauled his fifty-pound broadsword from its leatheren sheath and flung the point swiftly up before his face. The lion, its gigantic wings flapping like a vulture's, soared up and over him. Yellow-eyes the falcon left his shoulder, giving vent to shrill wrath at this horror

of the desert.

"Coming back! Diving!" roared the Hadji. Godwin flung himself from a sitting start, straight over the head of his stallion. The extended claws of the terrible beast grazed his back as he fell and ripped four gashes in the silk of his outer robe. Yellow-eyes beat her wings about the lion's head, trying to confuse and harry it.

Still holding his weapon, Godwin of England rolled over on his back. Flying sand had sprayed his face and a grain had lodged in his left eye; making him squint and curse. The lion hovered over him, then dropped like a boulder, ignoring the peregrine. Godwin twitched the point of the sword upward and at the first prickling contact with its belly, the monster screeched and shot forward beyond him.

El Sareuk made his horse leap, and stood by Godwin till he rose. "It's coming back," he said. "You are its target, obviously, lad. 'Tis no natural beast, I'll take oath on the Koran!"

The winged red lion came rushing at Godwin, half on sand and half in air, giving itself little pushes with its earth-touching paws. Godwin half-knelt, waited till it was within striking range, then gave a mighty slash with his iron sword. He missed, but the strange being, startled, rose up. Godwin saw one massive hind leg coming straight at him. He had no time to lift the broadsword again; neither could he drop in time to avoid a crushing

stroke of the leg. Quicker than thought he let go his sword and flung his arms before him.

The leg struck him on the chest, but to ease the force he had already wrapped his swift arms about it. The lion beat its way upward, and before he knew it Godwin, clinging like death to the hind leg, looked down and found himself a hundred feet over the desert. El Sareuk's astonished shout and Ramizail's piercing scream of terror came up to him, dim and half-heard in the rushing wind of their passage. The falcon followed, skirling her anger.

The lion paused and writhed round on itself like a common bazaar cat going after a louse. Godwin swung his body up and kicked it on the nose. It coughed dismally as one sharp spur caught its tender snout and gashed a bloody trench. It snapped at him again, its big teeth missing by a fraction. Yellow-eyes thrust her beak at its eyes and it turned from Godwin to bite out at her.

Godwin tightened the grip of his left arm and let go with his right. He drew his curved Persian dagger from its thonged sheath and judged his blow. Then he struck.

The lion, its neck slit from ear to gullet, spewed blood and uttered a horrible gurgling bellow. Slowly it began to sink toward the earth. Godwin risked a quick look down. His head reeled. He was still a good eighty feet up. If the lion died too soon, he would be smashed to a pulp beneath its dead weight. He

had thought only of slaying the thing, not of how he might land safely. He swore vividly.

"This proves Ramizail's contention that I have a one-track brain!" The winged beast drifted down in spirals, its hindquarters drooping, its wings feebly beating the air, and its head jerking back and forth. Godwin held his breath. It folded its wings and plummeted straight for sickening yards, then making a last try at rising, extended the pinions once more. Godwin saw that he was no more than ten feet off the ground. He loosed his hold. The dunes came up with a rush to meet him and he lit and rolled over. The lion above gave a final roar and crumpled, smacking the sand a yard from Godwin's feet. The warrior arose and wiped his forehead with a bloodied hand, as Yellow-eyes alit on his shoulder, ruffling her feathers.

"Whew! Lady, *that* was no illusion."

El Sareuk brought him his sword and charger, and mounting, he turned its head again to the west.

CHAPTER VIII

ABOUT the time that Godwin and his friends were fording the Rosetta Branch of the Nile, Heraj the sorcerer interrupted his leader again.

"He riddled out the levitating oasis, Mufaddal, and he slew the winged lion. I thought you'd like to know what sort of man is coming after us."

"If you had done your job at all well—" Mufaddal paused to thrust a piece of millet bread into his maw, and his half-brother interrupted him.

"You know my limitations. Allah curse it, what man ever stood up to the winged lion before today?" He took a piece of paper out of Mufaddal's chin, or seemed to, at any rate, and read a few words that were scribbled thereon. "Well, the dog is crossing the Rosetta now. I have a horrible feeling he can't be stopped." Heraj sprinkled salt on the scrap of paper and ate it meditatively. "Pepi wants to try the rolling sands stunt. I suppose we may as well. But this Godwin . . . by the *schedim*, what an opponent! Djinn or no djinn, I like him not!" He left, and Mufaddal, having lost his appetite, went off to inspect the plague ship for the hundredth time that week.

It was his own idea. He was as proud of it as of his skill at torturing captured Crusaders, a score of whom languished now in his dungeon awaiting his displeasure. The ship lay at the wharf, a black swift vessel with dark lateen sails slanting high above her deck. A company of Seljuk Turks and other Saracen allies stood about the dock, on guard lest some ill-advised person attempt to board her. More were stationed on the ship, and from beneath their feet in the sealed hold came the frightful squeakings and squealings and multitudinous rustlings of thousands upon thousands of great

gray rats, imprisoned there to fight and breed and die and wait their chance at sunlight again—sunlight that Mufaddal devoutly hoped they would view on the shore of England.

He massaged his hands together. What a picture it was! All these beauties, scampering over England, biting people, infecting masses of men and women, gnawing on children's feet, carrying the plague hither and yon until the whole island lay gasping out its fading breath nine-tenths of its population covered with the applesized tumors and hideous purple spots of bubonic. Then let them see who sent out Crusaders! It would be Saracen hordes overrunning Britain, rather than red-faced Englishmen defiling the Holy Land!

Some six hundred and forty-eight years before, the plague had lashed through Constantinople, and slain ten thousand souls in a day's space. Say, conservatively, then, that ten thousand per day would die in England. How many days would it take . . .

He went aboard, the better to hear the gibberings of his ghastly phalanxes. The boards were hot under his bare feet. The grisly ravening of the packed throngs of rats rose all about him, and in an ecstasy of delight he knelt to lift a hatch cover, yearning to gaze on them once more.

"Lord!" A voice burst out behind him. "O Lord, do not open the hatch! Think what thou doest!"

MUFADDAL turned, to see a Mameluke, an ex-slave converted to Islam and now a fine soldier, who was running toward him and waving his arms excitedly.

Mufaddal stood erect, a giant flat-nosed man of black face and blacker heart. He kimboed his arms and hissed, "What is this you say, slave?"

The Mameluke came to a halt before him. "O Lord, think if thou shouldst allow even a single rat to escape! Thou might be bitten, and we should have to drop thee into the sea!"

Mufaddal reached out. Very slowly his hands went around the soldier's neck, and the Mameluke was too startled to step backward. Mufaddal said softly, "Shall I throttle you? Hm! No. There lies no pleasure in the strangling of a worm. Shall I heave you into the ocean, as you would do with me should I be bitten? Bah! Too easy a death, and you might be able to swim. Shall I drop you into the hold?" The Mameluke gave a half-stifled howl. "I think I shall. The pets need nourishment. I can't have them eating each other."

He bent, still holding the gasping Mameluke by one clamped-tight fist, and raised the hatch cover and propped it with his foot. Then he lifted the soldier by his neck, swung him a little so that his flailing heels kicked out behind, and lobbed him into the opening. There was a squashy sort of splash, as

the man fell full length upon a turbulent blanket of milling, screaming rodents. At the same time there burst upon the upper air a horrible carrion stench, like that of a charnel house a hundred times augmented. The Mameluke gave a cry of pitiable terror, and another, and then was still. Perhaps he fainted, or perhaps the rats found his life in that instant.

Mufaddal knelt above the hatchway, chuckling in his greasy beard. His brown eyes lit with soft venomous delight.

Suddenly there shot from the blackness of the hold a single enormous rat, fascinated by the square of light and throwing all its nervous energy into one superb attempt to gain the outer world. Mufaddal quailed back in panic as it flew past his face and landed on the deck, slithering and floundering in an effort to regain its balance after the magnificent leap.

Lest more of them make the try, he dropped the lid to the coamings. He drew his scimitar. The rat, nearly blinded, jerked its blank gaze from side to side. Slowly he advanced on it, weapon lifted. It saw him, opened its evil mouth and squealed insane defiance.

He made a swipe at it, it dodged and leaped upon him. Its tiny sharp teeth met in his *gallabiyyah*, and it swung from the cloth, snarling like an angry cat. Frantic, he knocked it to the deck with the flat of his sword, slicing off a small portion of his own belly in the pro-

cess. Then he smashed down the blade: It split the rat in two and clove into the deck, so deeply that it took him three hearty tugs to disengage it.

Bleeding, cursing, and shaking with the after-effects of fear, he stamped off the ship and across the dock to his house, where he called his private surgeon to bind up the wound. He began to think about Godwin; and eventually the Englishman and the rat became thoroughly confused in his dark mind; so that his impersonal hatred for Godwin became a very personal loathing and desire for vengeance.

CHAPTER IX.

GODWIN dear," said Rami-zail, in a voice which for her was small and deferential indeed.

"Yes?" he said. He had been dreaming in the saddle of battles he had fought and brawls he would engage in.

"Godwin, my own, I'm seasick."

He stared across at her. El Sareuk said, "Niece; you were straddling a pony before you could toddle! This is unworthy of you."

"I don't care. I'm seasick." Her face was pale and beads of sweat stood on her forehead. "I'm afraid I'm going to disgrace myself," she said, and promptly did.

Godwin started to laugh. Then he stopped, and put a hand tentatively to his own belly. "El Sareuk," he said, "I don't feel so sprightly myself."

The Arab chieftain nodded. "You look like a poisoned camel, my friend. What ails you?"

"God knows. I too was almost born a horseback. But, hang it, there's something the matter with this steed. He keeps going buckety-clomp!"

"What?"

"Buckety-clomp; that's what it feels like."

El Sareuk said, "Now that you mention it, my own fellow has developed a sort of stagger. Could they have drunk bad water?"

"They drank what we drank. Damn," said Godwin miserably. "You know what it is? It's some more sorcery. Those thrice-cursed warlocks of Mufaddal's are up to something again. Mohammed, we'll never get there at this rate."

"Cheer up, thou stalwart smiter of satans;" said El Sareuk. "Despite their worst efforts, we've covered four-fifths of the distance already, and 'tis no more than midday!"

"I expected to be in Alexandria by now."

"I cannot imagine what this trick may be that works on you," went on the Saracen. "But luckily it leaves me untouched. As I am when in the saddle no more than an extension of my horse, I am naturally not susceptible to—"

After a long pause, Godwin cleared his throat and said, "Susceptible to what?"

"Never mind," said El Sareuk sorrowfully, and his lean face was faintly green. "I find that, after

all, I am."

They rode on grimly, until at last Ramizail said, "I'm sorry; I've got to get off and rest a while. I'm sick."

The two men, thankfully, reined in, and the party dismounted on the top of a dune. They all sat down. Shortly Ramizail said, "It's no good. I still feel awful. The desert's going up and down in front of my eyes."

"I noticed the same phenomenon," said Godwin.

"And I," agreed El Sareuk. "The sorcerers have poisoned us, surely."

There was another silence.

Godwin murmured, "That's curious."

"What?" asked El Sareuk, who was striving with might and main not to throw up.

"Well, I was watching the horizon swell and sink, swell and sink, swell and—"

"For heaven's sake, shut up," groaned Ramizail.

"And all of a sudden I noticed my horse doing the same thing." He turned his face toward them. "I mean he was watching it too, nodding his head. You know, it isn't just us. It's the land. It is rising and falling. The dunes are rolling like ocean waves."

RAMIZAIL raised herself on her elbows and stared out across the sands. "They are! We stopped atop a dune, now we're in a valley." She spat. "If this isn't the messiest miracle ever worked, and the dir-

tiest, and the foulest, then I am not the mistress of the djinn!"

"What'll we do?" moaned Godwin. "How can you fight a shifting desert? How can you make it lie down and be good?"

El Sareuk stood up. Strong though he was, strong as so much whip-thong and steel encased in leather, he could fight this nausea no more effectively than a puppy might engage in warfare with an active volcano. "Allah punishes me for sinful pride," he said, gagging. "Pride in my horsemanship. I, who have been to Mecca, still to harbor pride!" He shaded his eyes from the blazing sun, which was the only stable object in sight. "The magic cannot stretch from edge to edge of the desert, for such a thing is beyond the power of even the djinn."

"Speaking of which, have you found that ring, Godwin?" queried Ramizail with weak petulance.

"No, let me be," said the tallow-faced Godwin.

"I was going to say," continued El Sareuk, "that if we manage to survive for the few miles, I think we will pass these rolling sands. Can you stick on your horses?"

"While I'm alive, I can ride," said Godwin, but without much conviction.

"If you two can stand it, I can," nodded the girl.

Yellow-eyes, huddled on the cantle of her master's saddle, croaked out something that sounded like a blasphemy. The horses drooped their heads, and the camel bubbled

and wailed. They made a pitiful group. But the humans mounted, and the falcon flew up, and the beasts staggered forward. They would start to plow up a dune, and slowly like a wave in slow motion, it would shift until they were heading down into a valley. The horizon before them was a shifting, mutable line. Never had any of them been so ill. They had all lost their breakfasts, and seemed to be trying to recall the supper from night before last. Not a one of them but would have been happy to lie down, could he have been sure that he would die. But they pressed on, taking a weak courage from each other.

And at last El Sareuk, who in his way was stronger even than the champion Godwin, blinked watery eyes and said, "We've passed it!"

They lifted incredulous heads, and found it was true. The shifting sands had stilled and the desert lay wrapped in its customary peace.

CHAPTER X

THEY were almost within sight of Alexandria before they found what they were seeking. Then, just at the last possible moment, they sighted a large cluster of the black tents of the Bedouins. "Await me here," said El Sareuk urgently. "I shall colloque with these men and see whether I cannot raise us an army." He galloped away to the encampment.

Shortly there was a bustle and

stir therein, and many small energetic men of the Bedouin tribe came running toward the central tent, into which El Sareuk had vanished. The Bedouins were a cheerful and healthy lot, inured to hardship, habituated to a rough nomadic life. They were short and lean, and often looked fragile, but they were fiery, intractable fighters when aroused.

When some time had passed, Ramizail said, "He will win them. You'll see they'll be wild with desire to help us, and to avenge the soiled honor of Islam. That's the tack he's using—how Mufaddal has betrayed the dignity and integrity of the Moslem world by this fiendish trick of the pest ship, and how these Bedouins can expunge the stain by following us against his forces."

"Can you do soothsaying without the help of Mihrjan?" asked Godwin curiously. There was a great deal he did not know even yet about this strange tall child of Solomon's line.

"Oh, no. I'm just well acquainted with my uncle's ways of thinking and speaking and acting. I've seen him whip a crowd of assorted Saracens—Turks and Mamelukes and Arabs and Soldarii and Turcomans—into such a frenzy of fanatical zeal that they attacked a force nine times as large as their own, and cut it to ribbons. He's an old spell-binder."

And it turned out as she predicted, for quite soon El Sareuk came riding toward them at the head of a

gang of horsemen, some half a hundred in all, waving their swords and bows over their heads. Godwin knew instinctively what to do. He rose in his stirrups and threw up his tremendous broadsword and howled in Arabic. "Death to all who defile the name and honor of Islam!" Although he was a good Christian knight this war-slogan did not seem inappropriate to him in the least; and it pleased and flattered the Bedouins no end, for El Sareuk had told them of this mighty-chested warrior who had dedicated himself to wrong-righting and oppression-ending, leaving the Crusade to travel for this purpose in company with an Arab prince and half-caste girl. They answered his hail with lusty yells and riding up to him and Ramizail they pressed upon them all manner of foods, roast lamb in palm leaves, legs of fowl, delicacies of every sort, goats' milk for Godwin and asses' milk for the woman. Greedily they ate and drank, as they rode west, and finished the last crumb as they sighted the outskirts of Alexandria.

"We'll ride straight in," said Godwin, now grim and businesslike. "They're expecting us, so watch out for surprises. Their sorcerers have told them we're coming; I'll wager my left eye upon it. We'll find out which wharf the plague ship's moored to, and burn her to the water's edge. Then we'll seek out this Mufaddal swine, and pin him by his ears to an ant's nest!"

His band gave an ululating shout,

and the horses were booted into a gallop.

It was then about two hours before sunset.

They rode down one of the principal streets, a rather dirty, narrow thoroughfare, overhung by the houses on either side. Above the roofs to their left they could see the pinnacle of Pompey's Pillar, the towering column of red granite which had stood in Alexandria for eight centuries. "Twould be moored in the West Harbor, I think," said El Sareuk, who knew the city to some extent. He nudged his horse slightly into the lead and preceded the force through the heart of the place.

Few signs of life were in evidence. The air was hushed, even the wind off the sea had drawn back to avoid this silent city, and an atmosphere of expectancy held the blindly staring buildings. Only an occasional fellah or more substantial citizen would appear now and again, stare for a moment at the intent horsemen, and disappear from sight like a startled wild thing. Godwin tugged at his beard. They were not, as he had predicted, wholly unexpected. Word had somehow flown through the streets and bazaars of their coming, and of the imminent brawl. Perhaps magic was at work, too, though he felt and saw nothing to indicate it.

They approached the docks, catching glimpses of them at intervals in the houses, and Godwin grew even more tense and watchful. Then, as he and Ramizail and the chief of the Bedouins all abreast,

with El Sareuk four hand-breadths in advance, galloped round a turn, the attack was launched upon them.

FROM the roof of a house on the corner a great net, like those used by fishermen, was flung out, weighted and tossed by experienced hands; it fell upon the four of them, an entangling, encumbering, maddening enemy, knocking Ramizail out of the saddle, tipping Godwin's helmet over his eyes, snaring all their drawn weapons and seeming to writhe about them as though it were a sentient creature. Godwin shouted, "Use your blades!" and began hacking away at the cords with his broadsword. It was not the razor-keen instrument that El Sareuk's scimitar was, however, and the old Saracen had to release him after cutting free himself. Ramizail was dodging on hands and knees between the legs of the terrified horses. The Bedouin leader yelled, "leave the beasts;" and Godwin realized that they must. It would take minutes to slice the net sufficiently to unscramble the steeds. He slid off his Spanish charger, picked up Ramizail by the waist, dodged under a reaching fold of the net and gained the free ground.

Men were attacking from the mouth of every alley, Turks in Persian armor with three-foot scimitars and little round shields, mercenary Turcomans with stout short bows and fists full of arrows, Mamelukes in yellow tunics carrying battle-axes. The Bedouins pirouetted their

horses to meet them. Some of the enemy were mounted, many on foot. Battle-cries arose, and this was the strangest thing about the fight, for both sides lifted the same cry, the howling chant of Islam: "*Ul-ul-ul-ul-ul-ul-allah akbar! Allah il-al-lahu! Ul-ul-ul-ul-allah akbar!*"

Godwin, still carrying Ramizail, parried a vicious thrust by a Seljuk Turk and swung his broadsword. A wave of terrible and utter happiness swept through him. For this had Godwin of England been born and trained. His blade smashed down through helmet and skull to clunk dully on the neckpiece of the Turk's armor. Then he had jerked it free and turned and driven it squarely into the back of a foeman who was duelling with the dismounted El Sareuk. Again he whipped it out, whirled it above his head and smashed its broad flat against the bearded and grimacing face of a Turcoman. Blood and brains exploded like seeds and pulp from a shattered pumpkin. Godwin roared gleefully. Having cleared the space around him, he set Ramizail on her feet and said, "Stand back to back with me, sweet. My halidon! This is something like it!"

She slammed her back against his. An etched-bladed knife was in her capable hand; and she had the look of a ravening demon.

El Sareuk, wiping his dripping scimitar on the *djelabie* of a fallen opponent, said, "Where's Yellow-eyes?" for he had grown very fond of Godwin's battle-scarred old pere-

grine."

"I don't know. Trust her to come safe through this!" And in a moment, as Godwin engaged in sword-play with two Moslems, the falcon did indeed slant down from the sky, to beat her wings fiercely in the eyes of one of the enemy who was trying to slash at Ramizail under Godwin's arm.

"Thou beauty!" said Godwin, dividing the blinded gentleman neatly at the waist. "Thou cleaver of storm-clouds! Always art thou here when Godwin has need of thee!" Only to his falcon and his horse did Godwin speak in this affectionate fashion. It sometimes made Ramizail jealous.

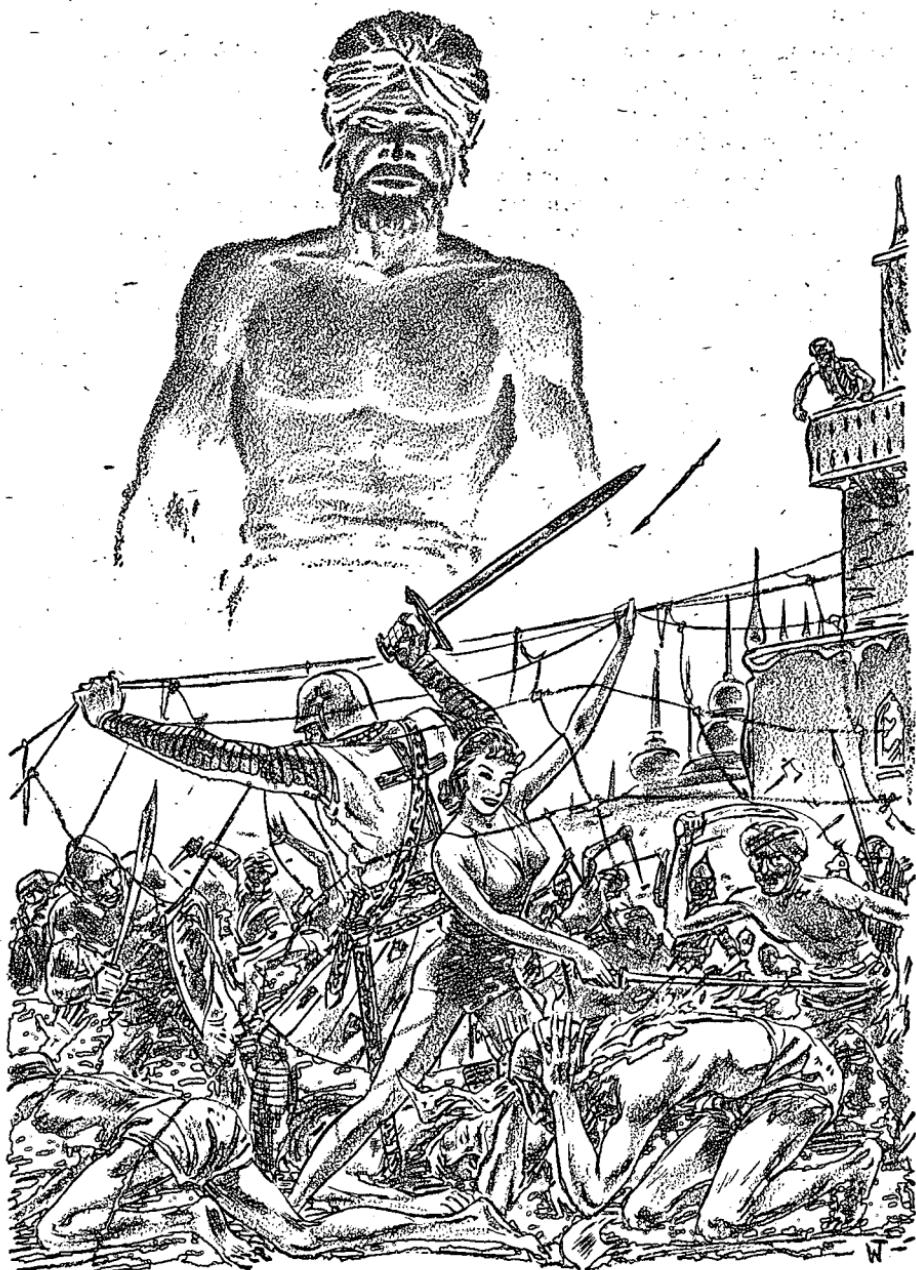
Many of their Bedouin allies had fallen to the arrows and swords of the attackers. Now men appeared on the nearest roofs, armed with

huge slings and round stones. Mufaddal evidently desired to take prisoners, and knowing that Godwin's forces would fight to the last man, had chosen this way of stunning some of them. A flight of stones laid out three-quarters of the remaining force, including El Sareuk; Godwin took a couple on his shield—he was the prime target—and wished he had an arbalest; he'd bring 'em down from those aeries! Then a rock caught him at the base of the skull, and he groaned and buckled over and struck the ground with a crash. Yellow-eyes fluttered up and hung over him, screeching. Ramizail bent above him, crying out with horror. Then big rough hands were on her, her knife was twitched away, and she was hauled off, keening like a banshee, to the house of Mufaddal al Mamun.



THE ENCHANTED CRUSADE

31



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CHAPTER XI

THE black-faced slob who led the troops of the Saracens in Alexandria was seated cross-legged on a rug, eating a bowlful of dry rice. He squinted at Ramizail where she stood, defiant and tear-stained, across the room from him. "Bring the slut here," said he. Two slaves dragged her forward. They took their hands away when they had stationed her in front of him; she immediately hit one of them in the eye and kicked the other on the shin. Then she bent over and thrust a finger under Mufaddal's nose.

"Watch who you're calling a slut, you pig-eyed ape-visaged son of a buck-toothed jackal!" she said in a low but quite audible snarl. "Do you have any idea who I am?"

He made as if to shrug, snatched her by the wrist and flung her prone on the rug before him. "I know who you are; you viper mouthed hell hag. You're Ramizail, who once controlled the djinn!"

"I still control them, you battered offspring of a pock-marked toad."

"Oh no you don't, you mildewed bowlegged haridan," said Mufaddal. With the "bowlegged" epithet he went too far; as any student of women, and especially of the vain Ramizail, could have told him. She rolled over and smiled up at him and before he knew what she intended, her teeth had met in the flesh of his calf. He leaped straight up with a full-throated bawl of pain.

She sat back and crossed her legs Moslem-fashion and said, "Now that the pleasantries are done with, let me tell you that the chief of all the djinn, y-clept Mihrjan would—and could—do anything for me. So just watch your step, you greasy-handed scheming scum, or you'll find yourself hanging by your—"

"Mihrjan would indeed have done anything for you," said Mufaddal, rolling up his cheap cotton trousers and dabbing at the blood on his leg with a piece of the equally cheap rug, which he tore off for the purpose. "But your friend Godwin sent Mihrjan away and told him to stay till he was called. And now he's lost the ring of Solomon, and you're helpless. Ouch!" he yipped as the rug rasped over his wound. "Well, almost helpless. I suppose I'll have to have all your teeth pulled before I make you my concubine."

"Before you make me a concubine, you draff of the Cairo gutters, you'll have to pull my teeth and draw my nails and hamstring me and break my arms, and even then I'll gum you to death!" she yelled.

He regarded her out of the corner of his eye, and thought that perhaps she was right, and that he should give up this idea. Certainly there was always the chance that her djinni might come looking for her against Godwin's orders; but he took a second look and decided the djinni could go hang. She was as luscious a piece of loot as had come his way in years. She was standing

now, hands on hips. He motioned one of the slaves up.

"Let's see what she looks like under all those layers of drapery," he said.

The slave grinned, whipped out a knife, and before Ramizail could turn he expertly ran its razor-honed blade up her back, within a millimeter of her spine. Her robes fell forward, slit from waist to neck, and she saved her modesty only by a quick grab at the front of them. Whirling—and Ramizail when she wished could move like a tornado in a hurry—she snatched the knife from his careless grasp, shifted it to a comfortable position in her hand, and with a lightning stroke cut the belt of his scarlet satin pantaloons. The slave clutched at them desperately . . . just too late. He turned to flee this demon-wench, the trousers entangled his ankles, and he sprawled headlong across the floor. The other slave came warily forward; groping out toward the girl.

She menaced him with the knife. "Want to lose your pants too, little man?" she asked.

HE was a shy and sensitive soul at heart. He glanced at his trousers, at the knife, turned pale, moaned, and dashed for the door. Ramizail faced Mufaddal, who was nursing his calf and gaping appreciatively at the slim brown back exposed by the slave's blade.

"Turn around for a minute, al Mamun," she hissed, "while I fix my robes. If you don't, the last thing

you'll see will be this silver sliver!" She flashed the knife within an inch of his popping orbs. He hastily swiveled round and faced the wall.

"One would think you were deficient in the body, and ashamed of it," he growled.

"If you would care to see just how extremely undeficient I am, you big baboon," she said, slicing off the whole top of her cream-colored outer robe and knotting it around her ample bosom in the form of a halter, with the copper-hued gown caught beneath it to chastely cover her diaphragm, "then you have only to snatch one peek over your shoulder. I assure you it would give you a moment of supreme pleasure, immediately before you died." A low estimation of her own attractions was never a failing of Ramizail's. "And you would die, Mufaddal. They tell me a sliced gullet can be painful. Do you want to find out?"

"No," said Mufaddal sullenly, staring hard at the wall. What a long-clawed cat from the alleys of Hell! he thought: Had she been less beautiful, he would slay her in this instant. But he wanted her, and without blemish or scar; so he sat motionless until she said, "All right, turn around. But no more clever ideas from you, or I'll really grow angry." She tucked the knife into her girdle as he pushed himself around to face her.

"Very well," he said, "I'll buy you. I respect your spirit, woman. 'Tis a trait I like in my women. How now, if I heaped your lap with

emeralds and nephrite jade?"

"Green was never one of my favorite colors," said she, sitting down comfortably across the rug from him. She cast about for a way to show her absolute contempt; thought herself of her playing cards which she always carried with her, and drew the pack out of a purse she wore on her girdle.

"What are they?" he asked, intrigued in spite of himself, as she began to lay them out on the rug.

"Playing cards. My djinn brought them to me from a far future time. They haven't even been invented yet," said she, studying the faces of those upturned.

"What does one do with them? Not that I care," he added, remembering his carefully-built reputation for single-minded fanaticism.

"One plays many games. I might teach you one, were you not as stupid as a hog and as dull-witted as an aged camel."

"I am as intelligent as you," yowled Muffadal. Then, since she was a mere woman, "More intelligent, blast your smirking face! Teach me a game!"

"The best one is called Poke Her," said Ramizail. "But to really play properly, we need four people."

Mufaddal threw a dish at the remaining slave, who was sitting in a corner trying to repair his belt. "Go fetch me Heraj and Pepi," he ordered. "Also bring some food. Something to munch on. And some fermented-bread beer." The slave

trotted out, gripping his ravished pants.

Presently the two sorcerers came in, Heraj very glum. "What's wrong with you, lemon-lips?" asked Mufaddal.

"What'd you do with Godwin and his crew?" asked Heraj.

"You know very well." "Yes, I know. You threw them into the jail with those captured Crusaders and the others. I don't like the risk, brother. You ought to kill the whole lot of them now. You underestimate that big Englishman. And the renegade El Sareuk is no babe, either."

"The cell is as well guarded as a prince's *harim*," said Mufaddal.

"Yes, but any man who can slay a winged lion is a match for fifty seraglio guards. Kill 'em, I say. The plague ship sails with the early morning tide. Why take unnecessary chances?"

"I have several simple but pleasurable notions in mind for Godwin and his misguided cohorts. Come here, I'll whisper one of them to you." Heraj stalked over, and bent down. Mufaddal sputtered wetly and intimately in his ear. Presently the sorcerer began to grin.

"Not bad. I guess it's worth the risk. I'll be extra cautious, anyway." He sat down beside Mufaddal. He extracted a goblet of saffron-yellow bubbling wine from his brother Pepi's yataghan pommel and drank it off. "What did you call us in for?" he asked, gazing at Ramizail with the expression of a

starving vulture catching sight of a prime steak.

"This wench has a game to teach me; and it needs four players. Go on, girl," said Mufaddal, with as close an approach to amiability as was possible for him to assume.

Ramizail dealt out five cards apiece, having unobtrusively stacked the deck, and began to teach them the exotic game of Poke Her.

CHAPTER XII

THE dungeon of al-Màmun was a squat brick square, with a flat clay roof and tiny slit windows, erected at a little distance from the main building of his establishment, between the wharf and the barracks that housed his common soldiery. In its stinking, superheated confines now lay a score of Crusaders, captured a month before while on detached patrol duty from Richard's forces; twenty-seven Bedouins, the remains of Godwin's army; fourteen assorted Saracens, in jail for one offense or another against Mufaddal; El Sareuk and Godwin himself.

There was barely enough floor space for each man of the sixty-three to stand upright, or to sit, if he didn't mind jostling his neighbors. Godwin was standing by a window looking out at the dock from which the dark plague ship, a tall obscene blot against the descending moon, had a quarter of an hour before set sail. El Sareuk was beside him, making suggestions.

"How if we all formed a kind of

wedge, Godwin, and began battering the door with the point? A few would be crushed, certainly, but the door might be torn down."

"Well, we'll try it, old wolf, if nothing better occurs to us!" Godwin leaned in the little embrasure, tugging fretfully at his blond beard. "If I had my sword . . . !" He clanked his leg chains with anger; they had chained him and El Sareuk and a couple of the brawnier Crusaders. Damn' all, he thought to himself. The ship is gone, what does it matter if we get out or not? Except to save Ramizail, of course. If I could remember what I did with that bloody ring! Mihrjan could sink that ship like an oaken chip.

And then, as the moon touched the far-crest of the sea, the door opened and a Mameluke thrust in his head.

"Godwin! Godwin's wanted!"

The prisoners all burst into raucous speech, invitations and curses.

"Come and get him!"

"Do venture within, jailer, and let us show thee something pretty!"

"Enter, thou fuzz-bearded son of a dung heap, and fetch him!"

Godwin pushed his way to the door. The Mameluke retreated behind it. "Step out, Godwin," he said, nervously prodding the Englishman with his sword. "Mufaddal wants you."

Godwin grinned evilly, and stepped forth. The Mameluke, who Godwin now saw had a file of soldiers at his back slammed the door

on the execrations of the prisoners. "Come along," he growled.

El Sareuk, watching from a window, saw Godwin disappear with a firm step into the wan ing night, clinking his leg chains jauntily.

For long he did not come back. The old Arab harangued the sixty-one men who were left, urging that they forget their feuds and crusades and band together against their captor; and they agreed whole-heartedly with him, and fell to making plans for escape and vengeance. Not a man of them but hated Mufaddal, and most of all for his loathsome scheme of the plague ship.

They all sat down, crowding up to one another in the heat and stench of the prison, and made a narrow aisle through the center of the place so that El Sareuk could pace up and down while he talked and gestured and plotted, rattling the iron fetters on his legs.

"If we can get out, and I say we can, even if we leave half our number dead on the floor behind us, then we must make a dash for the house, and pulverize this devil before he can concoct any more foul designs!" he shouted.

They all roared. The building seemed to quiver on its foundations. El Sareuk smote his forehead. "Now by Allah and again by Allah! Is this our answer? Remember, the walls of Jericho, O Brothers!"

They caught his meaning at once, and at the upswing of his hand every man let loose a full-throated bellow.

A Crusader edged into a corner shouted, "The walls shuddered! The force of the sound shook them!" They repeated the clamor, and dirt from the roof sifted down over them. For five minutes, they raised a thunderous din, and might have gone on doing so till the sun rose, had not the door drawn open just then.

They all peered round, and a gorilla walked in. It was chained around the ankles and had a quizzical expression on its broad flat face.

They were brave men, but unarmed, and they all shrank away from it with indrawn breath and small fearful cries. El Sareuk, pale, clutched automatically for his absent scimitar.

The door slammed. The gorilla scratched its head, leaned against the jamb, and remarked in a loud disgusted voice, laden thick with English accent, "What the hell is the matter with you white-livered ruffians? You think I'm going to eat you?"

CHAPTER XIII

THE gorilla stood by an embrasure, resting its elbows on the sill and staring moodily off toward the wharf. The sky was growing light with the approach of dawn. There is a small tide in the Mediterranean, much smaller than those of the greater oceans. It had been running now for nearly an hour. The pest ship, all sails spread, was hull

down on the horizon.

The gorilla said gruffly, "El Sareuk, there is a sick void in my vitals that makes the shifting sands appear a mild holiday by comparison! The ship is gone—we've lost our fight to save England!"

The Saracen scratched his beard. "You have fleas, friend, and you're giving them to me . . . Godwin, how did this terrible witchery come to pass? I mean this new form of yours?"

Godwin, the gorilla, grunted. "They hauled me into a room where the big dish-faced swine, what's his name —"

"Mufaddal."

"Yes, Muffin-face or whatever. He was sitting on a blanket with two of his sorcerers and Ramizail. She'd taught them one of her games with those 'playing cards.' The senior sorcerer, Heraj, had won about a bushel of assorted jewelry and gewgaws, and Ramizail had stacks of gold coins like a rampart in front of her. They were all bleary-eyed with lack of sleep, but the game has such a hold that none of them, not even Ramizail, stopped playing for full five minutes after I had been brought in."

"It must have been Poke Her. No game has such a fascination."

"Yes. Then Muffin-face tipped Heraj a wink, and the camel's bastard went into a trance or something, and the first thing I knew I was scratching myself on the rump where a flea had bitten me. I imag-

ined he'd presented me with a plague of fleas, till I realized that I wasn't scratching good armor, but bare hide with fur on it!"

"What a horror!" said El Sareuk, shuddering. "The man must have Satan's powers."

Godwin's shaggy head nodded. "'Twas he made it possible for the pest ship to be cargoed. Well, I looked myself over, and then knocked down a guard and took his polished shield away from him. They all had their swords out in a trice, but I only wanted to see my face in it. To have attacked them then would only have meant throwing my life away uselessly. I looked into the shield and—this is what I saw." He turned the gorilla's sad-somber visage toward his friend. "Heraj exchanged my body with this animal's, which it seems inhabits a savage jungle country far down in Africa. So somewhere in a forest my own body walks beneath the trees, clad in my robes and armor, thinking a wild beast's thought!"

"This Heraj must be powerful beyond thought!"

"He said deprecatingly to his filthy master that he had his limitations, but I cannot imagine them. What a bit of sorcery! Anyhow, Mufaddal then bragged that he would make Ramizail his concubine, and chain me to the bedchamber wall in the guise of a household pet. I had all I could do to keep my fingers from his throat. But I be-thought me of Ramizail at the mercy

of this pack of devils with me dead, and held my rage. Then she came to me, unhindered by them, because they wanted to see the spectacle of a maiden embracing a brute; and under cover of her embrace, she slipped this into my hand, and I hid it under my fur." He withdrew from his armpit the Knife which Ramizail had taken from the slave.

EL SAREUK'S lean face lit with a fanatic fire. "Why, we are weaponed, then! And we have this body, which they've given you, like a crew of imbeciles and village idiots, when its strength must equal that of ten Godwins!"

"Well, not that damn strong," said the gorilla reproachfully. "After all, I was no weakling."

"Yes, yes, but look here, friend; between the weapon and the new body, can we not force an escape from this hole? Subdue the caitiffs, take a ship and pursue the plague vessel! The thing is surely within our power now!"

The gorilla shook his head dully. "You are staring, old comrade, at the work of this Heraj. Do you think he couldn't stop an attack by us with a wave of one finger?"

El-Sareuk hissed fiercely, "Where's the Godwin I knew, aforetime? Has the magician exchanged your guts with some sheep's?" He clapped the beast on the shoulder. "And see, I have bethought myself of something. Ramizail never does anything without plan, and witty, clever plan

at that. She is playing cards with these magicians, true?"

"They were back at their game before I'd been hauled out of the room."

"I see her strategy as plain as though I had laid it myself! She has found the chink in the sorcerer's armor. He is engrossed with the game, to the exclusion of all else. We can make our break, and with any luck, burst into that room before he knows something's amiss! Then one swift twitch of your paw — forgive me, I mean, your hand — and he's carrion!"

The gorilla considered long. At last he said, "It's a slim chance, but by the rood, we'll take it! Better a slim chance now than no chance after they chain me to the harem wall! And 'tis a thought, that of pursuing the plâgué ship. I had given up all hope when it left its moorings: I never thought of another ship."

"Your brains are addled by the change in form, or you'd have rid-dled it all out before I did," said the Arab generously. "Now then, how shall we go about it?"

They talked in low voices for a few minutes. The day brightened beyond the window. At last El-Sareuk said, "That's it. The best possibility, I think."

"One other thing," said Godwin. "Around the knife when Ramizail gave it to me was wrapped this." He showed the Saracen the sigil of Solomon, the chain of which he had

placed about his neck, with the seal hanging down behind among his black fur. "What d'you make of that?"

"Why, she hopes you'll find the ring, and if you have both, you can call the djinn. Obviously the sigil is no good to her alone."

"Fat chance I've got to find the ring," moaned the gorilla. "It's jiggling around, a jungle somewhere, a thousand miles south."

"Yes. Ah well, we asked Allah for adventures when we left Jaffa for a nomad life," said El-Sareuk philosophically. "Though little did we dream they'd come in battalions like this!"

CHAPTER XIV

THE gorilla was as tall as Godwin had been in his proper form, four inches over six feet. The Crusader standing on his shoulders was the tallest of their lot, six feet two. His head came within a hand's breadth of the roof. Balanced by a palm on the ceiling, he was digging away at the baked clay with Rami-zail's smuggled knife.

The mob was singing. Once a guard had opened the door and bawled at them to stop that infernal racket before they all had their throats choked with dirt; but they had cursed at him so impressively that, sword or no sword, he had retreated hastily and barred the door behind him. The mob had gone on singing. The Crusaders had sung dit-

ties of England and home and beauty, with the Saracens humming and beating time; then the Saracens had taken over with chants of Islam and Bedouin love tunes, while the Crusaders accompanied them in muted bass choruses of *hmm-hmm-hmms*.

This din had effectively covered the scraping of the knife, which was chipping away the old roof at a good clip.

Now a bit of sunny sky showed through. The Crusader grinned, got a firm purchase with his bare toes on Godwin's hairy shoulders, braced his left hand above his head, hooked his right into the hole, and tugged downward. A big chunk of brick fell on his upturned face. He shook his blond head and chuckled. A trickle of blood ran into his mouth. Nothing could have tasted sweeter.

Gradually the hole widened, till at last it was the width of a man's body and more. Godwin, the gorilla, said in Arabic, "Enough! Now onto the roof, a dozen of you!"

Swiftly they swarmed up over him as though he were a scaling ladder. Slim Arab fought silently with big-bodied Englishman for the honor of being in the vanguard. Then Godwin barked again, "Enough!" They drew back, those who had not gone up through the hole, and he flexed his knees and gave a tremendous spring. Ape's muscles and man's know-how carried him straight upward; his paws caught the rim of the hole. Some clay crumbled beneath his weight, which was more than six

hundred pounds. But sufficient held to give him a moment's grace. He hurled his bullet head and huge shoulders into the gap, the clay wedged his belly in for an instant, then he had burst through and was floundering on the roof, chained legs still dangling within. El Sareuk's tough old hands took him by the wrists and hauled. He was safe.

CROUCHING, he led his party to the edge of the flat roof, walking with legs spread so his tight fetters would not clank. It was the landward side of the prison, facing the barracks of Mufaddal's soldiery. Before the barracks paraded two sentries. Below Godwin's gang were two more, dungeon guards, one posted at each corner. The sun was brilliant on their steel helmets as they stood silent, foreshortened by the height, unconscious of any harm.

Godwin singled out two of his men, pointed to their targets, and went with his colleagues to the wall above the door. From here they could see two more sentries at the other corners, and four stationed at the door itself. He allotted Bedouins to the remaining corner guards, gave a signal, and launched himself into the air with a war-cry that began in his belly and strangled in his throat, so that for fear of alarming the barracks guards all that emerged from his mouth was a sibilant fierce hiss. Behind him his silent henchmen followed him off the roof. Within the jail, the fifty-one men still prisoner

were raising echoes with a rousing drinking song imported from Germany.

Godwin, as the gorilla, smashed down upon two guards who had been sleepily cursing together the tyranny of their master Mufaddal. They never knew what crushed them.

The other guards, inundated by a wave of angry captives, died as quietly; while the men at the corners did their work with practiced, pitiless hands. Godwin skipped up to the corner of the jail and looked toward the barracks, some seventy yards away. As he had hoped, the two pacing sentries were oblivious of the slaughter. Their turns were made toward the barracks, so that only by an accidental or inquisitive turn of the head during their march would they take in the prison. He glanced behind him. El Sareuk was unbarring the door, while others were donning the distinctive chest armor and helmets and picking up the weapons of the dead guards. Three of them shortly went off toward the garrison building. They were all men who had formerly soldiered for Mufaddal, and Godwin hoped they could carry through their masquerade for the few seconds necessary to insure silence.

They did. The sentries died with never an outcry. Two of Godwin's men took up the pacing rounds. The others dragged the bodies down to the prison. They were rolled into it, together with those who had preceded them in death, and the dank stinking place now contained ten

naked corpses, where a scant ten minutes before had lain sixty-two men and a gorilla.

The gorilla now said to El Sareuk, who was opening shackles with a key taken from the chief guard, "The biggest mistake Mufaddal ever made was when he turned me into this monster and then sent me back to the dungeon to frighten you fellows with his dark powers. We've broken his jail, and now we'll break his house. And then, by God, I think we may even break his plague ship!"

"How? How?" asked the old Saracen fiercely.

"No time now, old one. Let's make for the house." He stationed four of his men at the corners and two before the door; these last two he regretfully deprived of weapons, for an assault on Mufaddal's own stronghold demanded at least four scimitars and a knife or so. Then he led his grim-faced legion across the heated earth toward the palace.

CHAPTER XV.

"**E**L SAREUK, are you sure you want to do this?" Godwin said anxiously, as he stood in the shadow of the building's north side and plucked tufts of fur out in search of an elusive flea. "There's small danger, true, but your dignity!"

The Saracen turned on him the face of a natural-born but long-frustrated thespian. "I would cut down the man who presumed to keep me from it," he said loftily.

"Very well. Be careful, venerable wolf. Remember that I don't know how fast this hulking body can run."

"I shall be as circumspect and as wily as the hungry small jackal."

"Then go to it, and Godspeed!"

El Sareuk peered round the corner of Mufaddal's house. The facade was a hundred and fifty feet long, and the door was set in the very center, with four Turcomans to guard it. He cleared his throat as though he were going to give a speech, hiked up his robes, and went bounding out to the dock, which ran parallel to the front of the house and a little more than ten yards from it.

The soldiers were chatting among themselves, and did not notice his advent on the dock, nor whence he came.

At once he began to croon, as if singing himself songs, and to leap up and down, ruffling his rose samite and blue silken robes out like broken wings, spreading his black Bedouin cloak by twirling as fast as a dervish, all the time mowing and grinning like a demented thing. The four turned from their conversation and stared at him. He appeared to see them for the first time, and diving forward with his head down like a battering ram, rocketed forward almost into their midst.

Two of them drew scimitars, but one of the others said angrily, "Seest thou not he is afflicted of Allah?" They put up their weapons, shame-faced.

He began to do a jig, little by

little drawing away to the south so that they wheeled to watch him. Over their shoulders he saw the blunt skull of the gorilla poke round the corner. It was his last chance to ham it up. He doubled over and gave his feet a flip and was standing on his head, all the while, singing a rather tuneless song of his own composition, about the amours of a pascha, to drown out any noise that Godwin might make.

One of the men cried, "Look, brothers, look! He wears gold-washed armor beneath his robes!"

They drew their scimitars, for no idiot of the byways of Alexandria wore the armor of a prince.

GODWIN covered the seventy feet in six bounds. Two of the men he clutched by an ear apiece and knocked their heads together, almost a gesture in passing, a thing to be done without thinking. Before the clang of their helmets had died away he was doing the same to the other pair. His new frame was, as El Sareuk had said, far more potent even than the human body which had stood up many a time to thirty opponents. The quartet lay stretched on the ground, gray ooze and red blood spilling from their broken skulls.

And so he had eight scimitars, nine knives, and six sets of body armor, together with six helmets. "Not so bad," said he, as his men stripped the corpses. "Now for the house!"

Those Saracens who were dressed

as Mufaddal's men went first into the house. Godwin followed, with El Sareuk (whose yen for acting was now glutted) and the forty-seven others, the Crusaders and Bedouins, treading on his heels. No one opposed them in the cool hall.

Godwin considered. Then, "Fan out," he whispered loudly, so that they all heard him, "and search the house. Slay all you find save women. El Sareuk, pick two Englishmen and two Bedouins and come with me."

Straight for the room of the card-players he went, his huge gray-black body speeding like a falcon's flight, with the five behind having trouble in keeping up with him. Through one room, in which five men sat eating, he raged silently; and before their astonishment at seeing such a brute appear in a civilized household would let them yell, they were dead on the parquet floor. Scimitars dripped gore and the gorilla's paws and thick trunk-like arms were spattered with it. Then they reached the room they sought.

Yes, they were still at the cards, even as he had hoped. Ramizail's game had held them fascinated, though Mufaddal had had to send out for more cash and gems half a dozen times. Surely, thought Godwin, surveying them for one fleeting moment from the doorway, surely this girl was as clever as the wisest sage in England! She had known that he would make good use of the dagger she had smuggled, and the hours she had won him.

Heraj, luckily, had his back to the door. Ramizail and Mufaddal himself faced it. Pepi had retired to a corner to snore, while the third sorcerer, Habu, had taken his place.

Mufaddal was squinting at his hand. He had four aces, but if his usual luck held, either Ramizail or Heraj would have a straight flush. Seven times that night the accursed wench had taken a pot with a royal flush. Seven times! It seemed to him a rather high number. He was becoming a Poke Her fiend, nevertheless.

He looked up to lay a bet, and froze as his eyes met the small fierce orbs of the gorilla in the doorway. A coward would have screamed, but a man of Mufaddal's boasted courage would have sprung over the heads of the players to close with the beast.

Mufaddal screamed.

CHAPTER XVI

HERAJ uncoiled like a spring, his mind hastily flitting through mental file cards for an appropriate spell against gorillas. He had no doubt that it *was* the gorilla. He was turning to check, and had just decided on the brief but pithy incantation which sent victims to the plains of Afghanistan, when a large firm paw smote him on the nape of the neck, and the subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

Habu clutched for his wand. He was a very minor warlock and needed a wand to do anything more complicated than the three-shell trick.

His hand never reached the ebony stick. Godwin picked him up and threw him contemptuously at the wall, which he hit so hard that his backbone was telescoped into itself and some twenty-nine of his other bones were fractured in more or less intricate ways.

Pepi woke up, saw the tip of El Sareuk's sword held steadily at the hollow of his throat, and closed his eyes as if he had been sand-bagged. "One move of those lips, witch-man," said the old Arab pleasantly, "one small spell begun, and you will be breathing through several more orifices than nature intended." Pepi lay as silent and motionless as a defunct stork, which he vaguely resembled.

Mufaddal was waving his scimitar in arcs before him, bellowing for his soldiers, calling on Allah to smite these heathen devils, and cursing the magic of Heraj that had turned a plain man into this ghastly demon-thing advancing on him. He had entirely forgotten that it had been his idea to change Godwin to an animal for vengeance's sake.

Ramizail lay on her back and drummed her heels on the floor and laughed with delight at the spectacle of her beloved—and despite his present shape, he *was* her beloved—wading in amongst the enemy in such headlong fashion. "Smear the big hellhound all over the wall, darling!"

"Ramizail," said the gorilla, maneuvering for advantage, "that is not ladylike. Get up off the floor and

stop swearing." He then feinted with one paw; caught the scimitar by the flats with the steel fingers of his other, twitched it out of Mufaddal's horrified grasp, stepped up to him and gave him a splendid uppercut on the point of the jaw.

Mufaddal joined his sorcerers on the floor.

"Now then," said Godwin, rubbing his paws briskly together, "fetch me that necromancer, El Sareuk!"

Pepi, milk-faced and shaking, was led into the center of the room. Had he been Heraj, he could have mumbled a spell ventriloquially and relegated them all to the top of a pyramid. Luckily he was not Heraj.

Godwin regarded him for a moment. Pepi found that the direct gaze of an angry gorilla is not a thing to put heart in a man. He gave a tiny moan, almost a squeak. The gorilla expanded his chest, which measured seventy inches, and said, "You're Pepi, if I recall correctly?"

"Y-y-yes, O Magnificent One," said Pepi.

"Pepi, I want you to transport me to the plague ship. Instanter."

"Oh, I couldn't do that," said the bony wizard, turning if possible a little paler than before. "I can only do small things, such as —"

"Then I guess you may as well die too," said Godwin regretfully, and reached out a paw.

Pepi nearly collapsed. "Wait a m-m-m-m," he said: "I mean wait a s-s-s-s. Maybe there's a way."

"Think of it fast, scrawny one,"

said El Sareuk.

"I'm thinking," said Pepi hurriedly. "I'm thinking."

GODWIN just then gave a cry of pleasure. He had spied his broadsword in its leather sheath, hanging on the wall above Mufaddal's inert form like a trophy, together with his Saracen helmet and kite-shaped shield and his curved Persian dagger. He bounded across and tore them down.

"A chap may be given the lineaments of a gorgon," he said, buckling the sword around his waist and clapping the helmet atop his round animal's head, "but he still seems naked without his weapons. By heaven, I feel better already! Now, Pepi, the method."

"Well, look, O Superb and Generous Prince," stammered the sorcerer, "I think I might work it with a carpet."

"I fail to see your point, sirrah."

"A flying carpet, O —"

"Never mind the O's. What's a flying carpet?"

"Not a very hard trick, really. You get on a carpet and say a certain incantation, and you're flying."

"How fast?"

"As fast as you will it."

"And you can do it? You can turn a carpet into a bird, as it were?"

"I think I can," said Pepi doubtfully. "No, no," he added hastily as Godwin flexed his biceps, "I'm sure I can."

"Do it, then. El Sareuk, put your

blade across his neck. At the first out-of-the-ordinary thing that happens, except for the carpet's enchanting, deprive him of his head."

El Sareuk laid his scimitar to Pepi's throat with a warm smile.

Pepi looked at a rolled-up Persian carpet in a corner of the room, the only corner that did not seem to be jammed full of bodies. He muttered something under his breath. The carpet slowly unrolled.

"By the diamonded pillars of Hell!" gasped El Sareuk. "I believe he can do it!"

Pepi brightened up as his magic drifted the carpet across the floor toward them. "If you will sit on it, O Magnificence, it will carry you to the ship, be it so far as a hundred leagues to sea."

"How do I work it?" asked the gorilla suspiciously.

"Merely sit cross-legged upon it and think. It will speed or slow as you desire. It is attuned to the wishes of the rider."

"That's right," put in Ramizail. "I have ridden many a carpet, dear. Nothing to it."

Godwin tugged at his bare chin, where in happier times there had been a yellow beard. He dropped his shield on the blue and red surface of the carpet, which was now floating leisurely an inch off the floor. It seemed solid enough. "Listen, old wolf," he said. "See you take care of the girl till I come back."

"Have I not done so for nineteen years?" asked El Sareuk reproach-

fully.

"And send these lads out to fortify the house as well as possible. The barracks will be sure to find out sooner or later that something's amiss over here. I hope I'll be back in time to help you, when the brawl erupts; but the ship's the important thing just now."

"By Allah, it is! If we all die, 'twas in a worthy cause."

"We won't," said Ramizail complacently. "I feel it in my bones." She smiled at Godwin. "Good fortune, my dear."

"Thanks. I'd ask you to kiss me, but I've seen this face. By the way," said he to Pepi, at whose neck the blade of El Sareuk still pressed lightly but insistently, "can you give me back my own body?"

"Only Heraj could have done that," said Pepi wanly.

"Damnation. Oh, well," said the gorilla; and without more ado climbed onto the carpet and sat down. "Good-bye, all," he said. His short brow furrowed. Great fangs bared briefly in a grin of concentration. Nothing happened.

"Give it t-t-time," yipped Pepi, as the Arab's sword just nudged his throat.

The carpet gave a preliminary lurch, like a horse testing its muscles of an early morning, and then with a whoosh shot through the door and disappeared. From the other rooms that lay between them and the front of the house rose shouts of astonishment, as Godwin's forces observed

him sail past them, clawing madly at the front edge of the rocketing carpet.

At that moment Mufaddal gave a low groan, unheard by anyone there; and Heraj the senior sorcerer opened his eyes and stared thoughtfully at the ceiling.

CHAPTER XVII

MAKING a test flight on the blue and red carpet in the house was tantamount to bestraddling a horse for the first time and having to jump him over a series of rivers and log falls and then gallop along a precipice edge, thought Godwin. He wished he had carried or led the thing out of doors before he got aboard. He missed the first door jamb by a fraction, canted over dangerously to skirt a startled Bedouin, aimed for the second door and saw he was too far off the floor, ducked his head just in time to escape a crack from the lintel, had the almost overpowering urge to close his eyes and let himself be buttered all over the ceiling, missed another door by a nice margin, grinned proudly, and saw that the front door was shut fast.

"Open it!" he bawled, something of the timbre of the gorilla in his frantic voice. "Open it, you pygmy-brained nincompoop!"

The Crusader on guard at the door flung it wide. It was an involuntary reaction, not in any way due to Godwin's command; he merely

meant to dash through it himself. But carpet and gorilla slanted sideways and flew at him, he dropped prone with a screech that four hundred Saracen foes would never have drawn from his lips, and the apparition sailed over him at thirty miles an hour, the gorilla hanging on to the edge for dear life.

Outside, Godwin righted the carpet and sped across the docks and over the Mediterranean. Now he took thought. He had controlled the carpet, it seemed, more by the quick fears and desperate hopes of his mind, than by any conscious direction of its flight. He would have to calm down. He exercised his iron will to the utmost. The carpet gave a couple of jerks, like a fractious horse being brought under control of the reins, and settled down to a smooth straight course. He glanced over his great hairy shoulder. The land of Egypt was receding rapidly behind him. Below, the choppy waves were blue and green with white caps, and the ocean looked extremely deep.

"God and the Holy Sepulcher defend me!" gasped Godwin. He pushed down on the carpet with an experimental finger. It gave slightly, but appeared to be quite safe. He tried a banking turn and then another which brought him to his straightaway course again. Courage returned with a rush. He laughed deep in the enormous chest. "This is pleasant, by my halidom!" he shouted.



His shield had fallen off the carpet somewhere back in Mufaddal's house. His sword was safe; as was the Persian dagger in its thong about his neck, and his Saracen-style helmet. The sigil of Solomon was still hung round his bull throat.

He speeded up a trifle. The wind sang in his small flat ears. He shoved his broad ugly muzzle forward, drinking in the rushing air. Never had he known a sensation such as this. It made horses seem like snails. He increased his velocity again. There was evidently no limit to the acceleration possibilities. He nearly forgot his mission in the joy of this stimulating experience.

HE made the carpet swoop toward the sea, confident in his new-found skill; it plunged like a diving eagle at the waves; which reached hungrily up for it. "Tantivy, tantivy!" roared the great ape deliriously. "Gone away! Lu wind 'em, boy!" At the last second he skidded the carpet level and shot along above the surface, just skimming the crests of the waves, laughing like a maniac. Then once more he rose into the heavens and slammed forward, small sharp eyes now searching the horizons for the dark blot of the plague ship, on its way to England with a cargo of hideous all-conquering death.

Shortly he sighted a sail. It might or might not be the vessel he sought. He headed the carpet for it. It grew swiftly, until he was circling over

it at a height of perhaps two hundred feet. He slowed the carpet till its motion was scarcely perceptible, until it finally hovered motionless above the ship. Then he lay prone on his belly and peered over the edge.

In the windy upper air the carpet rocked just a trifle, as a cork rocks on a pond caressed by a summer breeze. Godwin cocked an ear. From the ship below came the horrid din of thousands of imprisoned rats, squealing and keening and skirling their ghastly song of destruction.

He had found the plague ship. He drew back and grinned. Now . . .

Canting off to a spot some distance to the port side, he dropped the carpet, until it nearly touched the choppy sea, then aimed it at the side of the ship. He reasoned that he would be less likely to be seen if he came in at the level of the waves, rather than from above. There might be some element of terror about his descent from the clouds, but these men would be used enough to Heraj's spells to take a flying carpet in stride. Surprise was what he needed on his side; and if he could climb over the side without being seen, he might be able to reconnoiter the deck for a moment before beginning his attack.

He was then about two hundred feet from the vessel.

Abruptly, without any warning, the carpet dropped out from under him; crumpled, became a very ordinary red and blue carpet instead of a magical winged steed, and hit the

waves, where it floated for an instant until his body struck it in falling; when it collapsed and sank into the depths of the Mediterranean Sea.

Some distance below, a forty-foot white shark, called also a man-eater, peered eagerly up at the commotion.

CHAPTER XVIII

HERAJ opened his eyes and looked at the ceiling.

He had the grandfather of all headaches. He attempted to recall the spell against headaches, but it eluded him. He tried several others, but none of them would come out right. Evidently the blow at the base of his skull had somewhat addled his memory. He closed his eyes and resignedly waited for the thumping ache to pass.

He heard shouts of fear in other rooms, and then after a minute or two Pepi's voice nearby said plaintively, "Don't you think you might remove that blade now?"

Pepi was Heraj's favorite brother. He seemed to be in trouble. Heraj made a valiant effort and rolled his head, ache and all, to one side, opening his eyes as he did so. He saw the soles of Mufaddal's cheap shoes, in the left one of which was a large hole with the dirty foot showing through; disgustedly he swiveled his gaze and saw Habu, than whom he had never seen anyone deader.

He lifted his gaze and saw El Sareuk standing beside Pepi, one arm about the sorcerer's shoulders hold-

ing him steady, the other presenting a scimitar to the poor fellow's throat.

Heraj worked through the spell of immobility in his mind. He felt he had this one right. He flung it at El Sareuk.

El Sareuk did not move a muscle.

Heraj, uncertain that he had accomplished his purpose, glanced about at the half dozen Crusaders and Bedouins who were in the room. He gave them each a repetition of the spell. He enchanted Ramizail, who was eating dates. Then he cautiously rose to his knees.

No one moved, not even Pepi.

"All right, boy," said Heraj, standing. "They're stuck."

"So am I," groaned Pepi.

His sound of sorrow was echoed by Mufaddal, who sat up and felt his jaw tenderly. "Allah smite everybody," said Mufaddal. "Everybody!"

"Move, Pepi," said Heraj encouragingly. "He's immobilized."

"So am I, you lunkhead. Can't you see his arm and sword encircle my neck?"

"Oh, said Heraj. "Hum. Well. Can't you force back one of his arms?"

"They're like stone. Ouch!" The edge of the scimitar had cut him a little. "I tell you I don't dare move!"

"Neither can I," said Heraj, holding his head. "My stars and thaumaturgy; what a knock I took! Which wall fell on me?"

"The gorilla fell on you," said Mufaddal spitefully, "and if you think I'll turn a finger to aid either

of you two fumble-handed fat-brained cretins, you're badly mistaken. My jaw feels like a boil about to burst."

Heraj took a step and winced. "I can't do it; damn the pain; I can't move for a minute."

"I'm off balance," shrilled Pepi. "I can't stand here forever."

"Look," moaned Heraj, really wanting to help him but unable to bear the skull-cracking ache, "I'll take the spell off him for a tenth of a second. You get ready to push with all your might on that arm. It'll give you enough leeway. Ready?"

"I'm pushing," said Pepi.

"Here goes, then."

El Sareuk had heard all this as he stood motionless with his sword at the wizard's throat. He chuckled deep in his vitals, even though he could not move so much as an eyelash. A whole tenth of a second, eh?

Pepi was pushing with insane strength at the arm. Heraj took off the spell and immediately put it back on. There was a swish, a grating sound, and a dull squashing thunk.

Pepi, a bumbler to the last, had pushed on the wrong arm. Indeed, he had pressed so hard that El Sareuk in his new immobility now held it straight before him. But the scimitar had been gripped in the capable fist of the other arm. Pepi's head lay on the floor, an expression of astonishment on its homely and

now blood-bedabbled features.

Heraj raised a howl of anguish. He did not know that at the instant Pepi died, the flying carpet with Godwin aboard it, no longer supported by Pepi's incantation, had fallen into the sea almost on top of the man-eating shark.

CHAPTER XIX

GODWIN was a strong swimmer, and the body he now inhabited was as muscular as any in the world. After swallowing a pint of salt water and thrashing about for a moment below the surface, he struck out toward the plague ship. He was not sure what had happened, but he was afraid it boded ill for his beloved and his friends. Nonetheless, he was glad that the carpet had carried him at least this far. The destruction of the vessel was their major problem and he felt superbly confident that he could accomplish it.

The heavy iron broadsword weighed him down, dangling stiff and perpendicular from his waist; but he could not jettison it. It was just as well, though, he thought, swimming with vigorous strokes, that he had lost his shield before he left the land. Otherwise he would regretfully have had to abandon it to the deep. That old shield had been with him in many a tight spot.

The white shark kept pace with him, some twelve feet below, looking up at him and considering which

portion of this strange hairy beast might prove most succulent for an appetizer. At last it decided upon a leg. It lifted and turned in the water, opening its terrible mouth with row behind row of huge razor-sharp teeth that could tear a man in two with one snap. Godwin fortunately had just thrust his head under the surface as he brought an arm over and down, and saw the quick flash of the white belly below him. Automatically he contracted his whole body, hauling his legs up and then propelling himself forward with a tremendous flailing of his long arms. The shark missed its snap.

Godwin glanced at the ship and saw it was too far off for him to gain its side before the huge fish had had several more tries at him. The wind had sprung up, too, and the vessel was making away from him at a good clip. Cursing, he turned in the water and shot down through its depths, searching for the man-eater.

A flicker of white showed off to his left; he twisted, waited, holding his breath and thanking heaven for the capacious lungs of the gorilla.

It came straight at him, revolving to bring its underslung mouth into play. He maneuvered a foot to one side, and hurled himself upon it, catching it by a pectoral fin. With every ounce of power the gorilla's body could command, he tore at the fin. It ripped from the shark's side, sluggishly, loosing a slow torrent of blood into the dark waters.

THE man-eater writhed around toward him. He caught the jaws, upper and lower, with both hands, and wrenched them apart. Even the terrible potency of the shark's mouth could not withstand the strength of the gorilla and the whole-hearted will to win of Godwin of England. The hinges cracked and the lower jaw hung useless.

Godwin backed off, shoving himself through the encumbering waters, even his spacious lungs straining by now for air; but before he surfaced he meant to finish this brute. He hauled out the iron broadsword from its sheath, advanced once more toward the furiously thrashing white shark, and thrust half a dozen times. Then he swam upward, leaving behind him an ever-expanding blotch of blood and a quivering, twitching, forty-foot piece of dead meat.

The ship was far away. He sheathed the sword and set out to overhaul her where she sailed serenely, dark sail spread, with her cargo of obscene death.

"Even Godwin in his proper form could never have caught her," he thought to himself. "Heraj's baneful magic will win the day for England yet!"

Slowly he crept up on the ship. At last he reached out a paw and touched the slimy wooden hull. He gave a little quiet laugh. Now!

Dripping salt water, he hauled himself up the side. Cautiously his blunt head in its steel helmet poked over the bulwarks.

The vessel was fairly long for a lateen-rigger, with a low poop deck and a high rail, the great triangular sail, with a pair of quite small auxiliary sails, flapping merrily overhead, and the eternal quarrelsome noise of the rats pervading all the air within a quarter mile. The watch, four Mamelukes, were dicing on the poop. At the tiller layed a tall black Nubian slave, his loins wrapped in a bright orange cloth. Godwin presumed a crew of about six more, who were probably below in a portion of the hold shut off from the rats' quarters. Mufaddal would want a good handful of men for a job like this. He envisaged them loosing the rats in the seaports of England, likely at night, and slipping away on the tide, leaving their gruesome messengers to spread the bubonic plague far and wide. The picture gave him added strength and determination; though God knew he had needed no more than already boiled in his veins!

As silently as he could make the cumbersome body move, he hoisted himself over the rail.

Then he stood erect, all six feet four of gray-black hideous-visaged brute, drew the broadsword from its scabbard, set his thews for quick action, and pounding his naked chest with his left paw, so that a hollow drumming *boom-boom* drowned for a moment even the racket of the rats, he opened his saber-fanged maw and gave vent to a terrible cataclysm of sound, an utterance wholly at variance with his usual

war-cry, which seemed to come not from his human spirit, but from the body of the jungle beast — an ear-shattering, soul-searing mixture of highpitched barks, raging shrieks, deep-bellied howls and half-joyous, half-oddly-sad roars; roars which spoke of peaceful days beneath great sheltering trees now left forever, for the crash and thunder of grim yet gratifying war.

Godwin of England had come aboard.

CHAPTER XX

THE Mamelukes were stunned. To say this is an understatement. They were shaken, terrified, horror-struck, and a thousand more emotions — all bad — filled their hearts than they could ever have catalogued.

They were very brave men indeed, but they had never seen a gorilla, and certainly never a gorilla that appeared out of the sea to stand waving a Crusader's broadsword on their deck. As one man they stiffened, and gaped, and were lost. For Godwin, with a somewhat shortened repetition of his initial greeting, was bounding into their midst before they could budge.

One man died with the dice in his hand. Another lost his head before he could recover his wits. A third put hand to hilt and was cloven with a leer of terror still on his face. The fourth managed to get his scimitar cleared. Precious little

good it did him. It came from the sheath only to clatter on the deck.

The Nubian slave at the tiller was a different proposition. He was as tall as Godwin, a thick-legged old warrior, with broken teeth and scarred face to attest his many battles. Leaving his post, and catching up a naked scimitar (that was easily six feet in length) as he passed the rail where it had lain propped, he ran at Godwin full tilt, yelling a battle slogan from his homeland far to the south.

Godwin thrust out his blade to parry the first vicious swinging cut. The swords clanged like hammer on anvil. The black was skillful. Godwin had all he could do to keep the singing steel from his chest. He tried a two-handed swipe, which the slave ducked blithely, and the scimitar came licking in to draw a thin scarlet line across the gorilla's belly. Half an inch further and Godwin's guts would have been spilt on the sun-hot boards.

Godwin's new reach, a stupendous one, was an advantage. In ferocity and broadsword skill he was unbeatable, but a long scimitar was a terribly formidable weapon in the hands of such a swordsman as his opposite number. He parried, parried and cursed the fact that this tall grinning half-naked black should keep him at bay so long. From the corner of an eye he saw more Saracens emerging from a hatch up forward. It was no time to stand and

fight according to gentlemen's rules. He had a job to do, and this Nubian might very well cry halt to that job. Given equal weapons, Godwin would have dueled with him thus by the hour; but now he needed quick victory.

"Sorry about this," he grunted, in apology for the dirty trick he meant to play. He did not need to play it. The Nubian fell back, eyes and mouth starting wide.

"It spoke!" he cried out, and flung down his scimitar. "Oh, Allah, it spoke!" He turned and ran for the rail and dived over it like a man fleeing the wrath of Eblis. Godwin could not help laughing. Evidently, to this fellow's way of thinking, a gorilla that climbed out of the sea and fought with a broadsword was acceptable, but one that did these things and spoke in Arabic also was an intolerable wonder and a thing to boggle the mind. There was a loud splash. Another foeman was dispensed with.

There were half a dozen coming up the deck toward him; his estimate of the crew had been right. He saw two bowmen among them. Bad! He tucked his broadsword into its sheath and bent his knees and leaped for the yard of the lateen sail, caught it by both paws, hoisted himself like a gymnast up and over and knelt on the yard, balancing by a palm on the bellying sail. Carefully he got to his feet, which were prehensile enough to grip the round yard and give him a feeling of con-

fidence in his balance. Commanding his soul to his God, he ran straight down the yard until he had reached the mast. Behind him four arrows had thunked through the sail as the bowmen shot at the places they thought he might be.

HE shinnied up the mast, which was on the opposite side of the sail, luckily, from the crew, and cautiously peered round it. Something out on the ocean caught his gaze, and he saw it was a small black dot, rapidly receding from the ship. The Nubian swordsman was still in a hurry.

The bowmen would be on his side of the sail in six jumps. The only solution to his plight burst into Godwin's brain like a crossbow bolt from the sky. He slid down the mast, came to a teeth-jolting stop as his feet hit the yard, took the mast between both powerful paws and shook it. It was stout, but thin compared with the masts used in other rigs. Fangs bared with effort, hind-feet curled and braced round the yard, he exerted all the lusty power of the gorilla's arms, all the brawn of the strapping torso, all the pent-up energy that roiled and pulsed beneath the tough old hide. One mighty heave he gave, and another, and a third.

The mast complained, creaked like the nine-mile-high gate of Hell opening, and splintered in two as if struck by lightning.

Of all Godwin's feats of strength

— and they were many — this was surely the greatest. As the mast crashed downward, carrying the rippling sail with it to the deck, he stood on the swaying yard and ostentatiously dusted his hands together. Suppose it had been done by the body of a jungle beast? Was he, Godwin, not inside it?

The broken mast struck with a crash that shook the ship and brought a chorus of piercing squeals from the imprisoned rats below. The yard swung violently and its end thudded to the deck, so that Godwin was knocked off balance and only saved himself by a quick kneeling and grab with both paws.

A large area of the main deck was covered by the collapsed dark sail, beneath which struggled a number of formless lumps that were the crew. Godwin picked himself up again and ran like a tightrope artist down the slanted yard to the poop, where he leaped off and turned at bay, teeth and claws and broadsword all bristling and ready.

The bumps in the sail moved about futilely, hunting an exit. The invisible rats made the air hideous with their unclean, abominable rantings.

The thing to do was go down and wade into those lumps with his sword. It may not have been precisely a fair attack, but Godwin was not absorbed with fairness at that time. He had taken two steps, the short ferocious steps of the gorilla, when an archer found the edge of

the sail and rolled out from under it, an arrow nocked on his bow. He sighted Godwin at once and the bowstring tightened. Lying on his back, he took swift aim at the chest of the slavering horror on the poop deck.

THERE was no time to reach him, no barricade to dodge behind, and the distance was too long to fling his sword accurately. Godwin jerked his head round. A brazier of burning coals stood on a brass trivet at his side. Quicker than thought he had caught up the pot of them and in the same sidewise motion flung them down at the Bowman. The man saw them coming, let fly his arrow and tried to roll out of range. Several coals took him in the face and neck. Seared and scorching flesh sent up an acrid, nauseous stench as the poor wretch screamed with agony. His arrow had gone wild by the slimmest of margins.

The other archer emerged from the opposite edge of the sail, shaking his head. He was bleeding from the nose and his eyesight had gone slightly awry. He leaned on the bulwarks and rubbed a fist into his eyes. He looked up and saw the gorilla coming at him over the crumpled, heaving sail.

He plucked an arrow from his belt and fitted it hastily to the string. He did not understand in the slightest how this awful creature had appeared aboard his ship,

but it had fled once from his bow and so it might be slain by a mere mortal. He was a Seljuk Turk; this archer, proud and cruel and infinitely superstitious; he felt sure that Godwin was a spirit of some kind, yet he knew that spirits may be slain and all the odds seemed to be on his arrows.

The first one twanged out from his short sturdy bow.

Godwin saw it hurtle at his breast, and in his proper shape might only have watched it strike him, for he had no shield and only the smallest fraction of a second in which to take thought. But the gorilla's body was made of faster muscles, quicker reflexes, than ever a knight possessed. One arm flicked across his chest, and the arrow was caught in flight, three inches before it would have buried itself feather-deep in his thorax.

The Turk, a second arrow already on the string, froze. Before he could force action into his petrified hands, the gorilla was upon him. Great black paws took him by throat and groin, he was lifted over the brute's head, and the air whistled around him as the waves of the Mediterranean reached up to assuage their age-old hunger for living flesh.

Godwin watched him vanish into the sea. Weighted by his armor, he never came up. Godwin grinned.

Unnoticed behind him, the coals from the brazier had started a fire in the fallen sail, a fire which was rapidly spreading in a score of directions.

CHAPTER XXI

GODWIN the gorilla bethought himself of the four men remaining under the sail. He turned about and saw the fire, which was now licking up fiercely.

"God defend the right!" he gasped. "Here's a rare hazard!"

Two men had succeeded in freeing themselves from the smothering confines of the sail. They came at him warily, side-stepping the flames, their curved Damascus blades at the ready.

"Beast or satan," shouted one, "prepare to perish!"

"Ho ho," said Godwin throatily in Arabic, "you'll have to back that threat with action, little man!"

The fellow halted, turned a sickly green hue, and buckling at all his joints pitched over in a dead faint.

The other was affected in quite another fashion, and leaped toward Godwin, scimitar flashing.

Godwin yanked out his long sword and batted down the first attack. The Saracen was a swift and elusive fencer. His point darted through Godwin's guard and slashed a long wound down the biceps of his left arm, laying bare the dark flesh for a moment before red gore covered it and trickled out through the fur.

Godwin yelled and swung his weapon in an arc, knocking off the other's helmet and inflicting a nasty gash across his scalp.

The Saracen stabbed straight.

Godwin twisted his body sidewise, and the keen blade cut through all but a thread or two of the belt that held his scabbard.

Before the enemy could recover from his lunge, Godwin brought his wounded left arm over and down in a hammer blow. The doubled paw caught the man exactly on the center of his skull, and he fell like an arrow-pierced hare, kicked a time or two, and lay still.

Two foemen remained beneath the sail. One of these had been knocked unconscious and now lay smothering to death. The other, crippled by the falling mast, was slowly dragging his broken body along in search of the open air when the fire burst into crimson bloom about him. He wailed like a tormented soul on a spit; broke his nails on the deck in a mad endeavor to crawl to safety, and at last struck his forehead on the coaming of a hatchway.

Forgetting the rats below, he threw all his waning vitality into a heave that sent the hatch cover up and flat on the deck. Then he pushed himself over the edge and fell, to escape the flames among the ravenous horde of great gray rodents.

IN the frightful din of crackling flames, gibbering rats, and lapping sea, Godwin never heard him scream at all.

He stared narrowly around him now, scratching absent-mindedly for an annoying flea in the small of his back, and saw that no one moved

on the deck of the plague ship. By good fortune, by the grace of God, and by his own skill and brute force, he had obliterated the crew. Even the men who had fainted had inhaled flame and died. Godwin stood alone on the deck, while beneath him sounded the perpetual vociferant clamor of the rats.

The flames spreading dangerously close to his bare flat feet, he skipped along the bulwarks and up to the poop, which was as yet untouched by fire. Here he watched it eat out across the deck, devouring sail and broken mast and at last portions of the deck itself.

The heat in the hold became unbearable for the rats then, and they began to fight savagely to get at the open hatchway, the sail above which had burnt away. Their bodies piled up beneath its square of smoky light, and the pile grew and grew . . .

Godwin in his gorilla body stared glumly at the flames. "What a way to die," he growled aloud. "What an end for Godwin, who was once king of all broad England! Look at the damned water; probably a million hogsheads of it within spitting distance. Look at the damned fire. Look at the two of them, and here am I, who can't begin to bring the one to the other until the ship sinks under me! What a finish!"

For the first time in his life he felt total despair. He had saved his home country, aye, but it was not likely that his deed would go down in song and story, for El Sareuk

and Ramizail and the others were in all probability dying at this very moment under the swords of Mufadal's three hundred scum. If only, he thought, one small ballad might be written about this *geste*!

He stiffened the gorilla's backbone and put such selfish wishes behind him. He *had* saved England, whether anyone ever heard of it or not. That was worth dying for! That was even, God save the mark, worth Ramizail's death or enslavement as a concubine! Much as he loved the wench, the population of England outweighed her in the end.

If there were but some chance at survival. If only there were a small cockleshell of a boat he could put off in, even the material for a makeshift raft. But there was nothing, nothing but the sea and the sky and the ship in flames, and theraging rats below him.

The sky! What now, if stout old Mihrjan the djinni were to come swooping down out of that clear hot sky!

But no, Godwin must needs relegate Mihrjan to other parts, must forbid him by the Seal to follow them, because of stubborn pride and petty resentment against Ramizail's harmless tricks!

His wound hurt him. He felt the gorilla's body yearning to tend it, to lick it clean and start the healing processes. For a moment he was disgusted at the idea, and then hopeless, for what did it matter if the wound began to heal, when he was

doomed to a terrible death by fire or water? But the instincts of his body would not be denied.

With a long sigh, Godwin of England sat down on the rough planks of the poop and began to lick his torn biceps with a rasping tongue.

Simultaneously with his seating himself, the first rat clambered up the pile of torn corpses and launched itself out of the hatchway and onto the deck.

CHAPTER XXII

"WELL," said Mufaddal, who was eating a hard-boiled egg in a sloppy manner, "did you get to the barracks?"

Heraj picked up a cold towel from the air near his knees and wrapped it around his head. "I did. Wow! I had to cast immobility spells on two more of these devilish Crusaders, who were stationed at the back door. But I made it to the barracks. The soldiers are even now deploying around the palace. Oosh! What an ache!"

"I don't see why you can't collect yourself and put the whole pack of them under a spell," said Mufaddal irritably.

"I've told you and told you, I have a headache, that's why I can't do it, curse you," said Heraj. "I have all I can do to keep the ones in this room and those two back there motionless. I have to keep concentrating and it hurts like seven devils in my brain. Then I've flung a force wall

around this room, so no one can get in or out except myself, and that takes concentration. I tell you, I never went through anything like it. All I can recall are these two spells and the one for curdling milk. I could no more bewitch all these benighted villains than I could — could fly to the moon."

"Incidentally, did you find the gorilla? Godwin?"

"No I didn't, and I hope I never do. I don't want to come within range of those ham-sized fists again, not even with a legion of fiends at my back."

"Is he still a gorilla, if he's alive, I mean? Or did he switch back when you swooned away?"

"No, he's a gorilla. That's a different sort of spell from force walls and immobility. But to hell with Godwin. I want to nurse this lump. And you're confusing me, too. My spells are wobbling. I just saw El Sareuk there move a good half inch. If you want those swine kept alive for torture and other pleasantries, I've got to concentrate. Oh, my newts and bat-wings! I shall die!" He went over and collapsed in a corner, where he stared moodily at the corpses of his two brothers and mumbled to himself.

Mufaddal peered out the window. It was too small to negotiate, but wide enough to command a partial view of the back grounds. He saw a dozen of his men go dashing from the shelter of one outbuilding to that of another.

"In a minute or two," he said confidently, "in a very few minutes, by Allah, these renegades and infidels will see what a real besieging is like!"

And at the thought, he stroked his greasy beard and crinkled up his soft brown eyes, and giggled like a maniac.

CHAPTER XXIII

GODWIN looked up from his wound-cleansing. He had had a glimpse of a gray shape scuttling across a field of crimson flame. He stared, and saw a score of large rats eyeing him from the lower deck. He bounded to his feet, thick gorilla toes and fingers curling with a fear that no amount of bravery could still. The plague! The ravishing, filthy, obscene plague! Even from a flaming ship in the midst of a waste of waters, there might be some escape at the last moment; but from the bite of one of these rats would come a foul death that nothing could turn aside, not even the djinn themselves!

He canvassed the poop. No high pedestals on which a man (or a great ape) might perch, no protective armor of any description to foil the attack of the rats. Here he stood, alone, armed with a broadsword and a dagger, a helmet and a golden sigil. There was but a single chance. He might squat on the bulwarks at the very stern, for they were high and would give him

the advantage of being a little above his squealing enemies. He leaped and balanced and squatted, and his naked iron broadsword hung down between his bent knees as he awaited their first move.

This was not long in coming. The poop was the only part of the ship which was not being ravaged by fire. The rats headed for its temporary safety. As they poured over it, a repulsive and horrible crew, snapping and snarling at one another, their fangs yellow as amber slivers, their hides mangy and often showing the first signs of plague, the leaders spied Godwin roosting unhappily on the rail. They halted, considered, twitched their whiskers, and then made for him. He was meat.

The first rank charged in and were slain eight at a blow, by the sweeping sword. The second rank fared likewise. The rats drew back and stared beadily at him. He could fairly hear their odious, menacing thoughts. He waited. A gigantic rodent, half its fur gone in some hideous battle below decks, came flying at him. The perfect reflexes of the gorilla flicked the sword out and spitted the beast through the guts. It hung on the sword, squirming and piping weakly, as Godwin whipped the blade back and forth and clove the small skulls of a dozen more.

A myriad of the grisly horde came tumbling up to the poop deck. Godwin was now mangling and mutilating constantly, as more rats poured

upon him. Some of the devils were already feasting on their defunct cousins.

And so, for minutes that dragged like weeks, Godwin of England fought off the rats, and waited without hope for the inevitable end, when even his mighty muscles should grow weary and his eye become slow, and at last they should reach him.

A close-packed group of them attacked him from the right, and some of them even leaped upon the rail and came at him. He flailed his sword frantically into the brown of them, sending them slithering along the deck, knocking them into the sea, or spoiling them where they stood by messy divisions and squashings. Then a legion came from the left, and he leaped up to his feet and balanced precariously on the bulwarks as he bent and swiped back and forth.

THE closest any of them had come yet was in this moment, when three great bullies of rats, all fat and evil and ugly, leaped upon his swaying leather scabbard and clung there. They might have crept up it and bitten him before he could slay them, except for the fortunate stab of the late Saracen fencer, which had all but severed his sword belt. The last few strands parted now, and the sheath fell to the deck, carrying rats and belt with it.

Something rolled out of the sheath and made a small metallic sound as it struck the overturned brazier.

Godwin risked a glance at it. It gleamed dull yellow in the sunlight.

"By the rood, mass, book and candle!" yelled Godwin, startling the rats so that they drew back in haste, "the ring of Solomon! So that's where I put it! In the bloody scabbard! Of course, I remember. Some place where 'twould be always near my hand!"

Nothing, not ten thousand times as many rats, could have kept him from that ring. He leaped from the rail, half-squatting to bring his sword hand near the deck, and the blade was a flaming scythe in his grip. It mowed down rats by dozens, by scores, by hundreds as they came crowding at him. They leaped, and the point shot up and down more swiftly than the eye could command, and they had died in mid-jump. They crouched in at him, and the tops of their heads were torn off or jellied by the sweeping broadsword. Then they drew back; for a rat is intelligent, and even their hunger was not enough to force them out against that invincible weapon without some thought on the matter.

In the few seconds' respite Godwin leaped, scooped up the ring, dived back to his seat on the rail. The rats came forward once more. With his left hand he locked the ring to the sigil on its chain about his neck, and in a voice of joyous thunder he shouted, "Mihrjan! I cry up Mihrjan!"

Spang in the midst of the rats, shod with sandals of blue-white fire

so that the gruesome beings scrambled back from his vicinity, appeared the ten-foot form of Mihrjan the djinni, turbanned with ivory silk, pantalooned with lustrous purple velvet, and exuding an aroma of attar of roses.

He salaamed deeply.

"The Lord of My Life," said Mihrjan sonorously, as the rats retreated down the poop deck, "would seem to have need of my humble services. I am his to command!"

CHAPTER XXIV

GODWIN the gorilla sighed. He had never uttered a more fervent and thankful sound in all his life. "Mihrjan," he said, "I must say, yes, by gad, I will say, I'm glad to see you."

Mihrjan cast a look about him. "Thy sentiments are understated, Lord. It is a trait of thy race."

"Yes, well, never mind that. Look here, can you get rid of these damned slimy things? My arm's weary with swatting 'em."

The djinni gestured; a wind arose and swept along the poop; and the rats were tumbled down onto the main deck, where they commenced to brawl among themselves again, on the edge of the fire.

"And see here, while I think of it, there's a black fellow swimming out there somewhere. Can you see if he's still at it, or has he sunk?"

Mihrjan vanished and returned before the air could rush into the

vacuum his passing had created. "He swims, Master, but weakly."

"Well, he's a good chap; albeit misguided into serving under that lousy Mufaddal beggar. He's one of the best swordsmen I ever faced. Can you transport him home to Nubia?"

Mihrjan grinned: "It is done."

"Good. I felt rotten about him. Poor devil jumped overboard because I spoke to him. Which brings up this: can you make me myself again? That is to say, take this ape's body back where Heraj got it, and give me my own?"

Mihrjan scowled. His mind seemed to be wandering among far countries. At last he said, brightening, "I see how 'twas done. I can undo it."

"Then by all means —" Godwin found that the paw with which he was gesticulating had become a strong brown hand, a bit grubby, perhaps, but still his own natural hand. He stared down. His robe and armor were in tatters. They had evidently seen some life and hard times in the jungle. The body appeared to be whole, however, and tingled pleasantly as Godwin's personality took it over once more.

Mihrjan said, "Suitable raiment is in order," and Godwin was wearing white samite and sky-blue silk over gold-washed armor of meshed steel. His broadsword hung in a new scabbard, bedecked with gauze, and his beard and hair were freshly cut and combed. His skin felt clean, and

seemed to have been bathed within the hour.

"What a talent you have there, Mihrjan, old fellow," he said admiringly. "May heaven beshrew me if I ever part with you again."

"'Tis wise to allow me to stay within call." The djinni frowned. "And my mistress, O King? She is safe?"

"I hope so, but I left her quite a while back. Had to sink this ship, you know. It was going to England with a cargo of plague. Oh, you know that, you were there when we found Sir Malcolm. We'd better get back to Mufaddal's palace at once, Mihrjan. Just one more request: will you sink this pest ship for me?"

"It already sinks of its own accord, My Lord." And indeed, the deck was slanting beneath their feet. Down at the bow the rats were huddled, quarreling and fighting among themselves and making their revolting chorus rise up to foul the heavens.

"Good. Then let's go."

Mihrjan placed a hand under his elbow, and suddenly they were five hundred feet above the Mediterranean, looking down at the ship which Mufaddal had fondly hoped would be the death of the British nation. Even up here Godwin fancied he could hear the final squeals and horrible wailing shrieks of the cargo of great gray rats. Then Mihrjan headed landward, and the plague ship disappeared behind.

CHAPTER XXV

THEY stood together in Mufaddal's private chamber. The spell of immobility had been transferred to the dark faced Mufaddal and his chief sorcerer, while Ramizail and El Sareuk with their allies the Bedouins and captured Crusaders were free to move where they chose. They clustered now about the ten-foot djinni.

"What of my eight men at the prison and barracks?" asked Godwin.

Mihrjan said, "Slain, O King, cut down by surprise without a chance to defend themselves."

"Damn. And my falcon, Yellow-eyes?"

"She perches on a roof-top in the heart of Alexandria, watching anxiously for a sight of thee."

"Bring her here, please."

The old bird, looking rather wind-blown and surprised, appeared on Godwin's mailed shoulder. She thrust her notched beak into his ear affectionately, and he said with fervor, "Ah, thou!"

"And now, O Master of My Being, shall I vanquish the foemen without the house by a whirlwind from the plains of Hell, or lightning from the clouds? Shall I bubble their eyes from their heads with gouts of searing flame?" asked the djinni fiercely.

"No, man, no! We'll beat 'em in fair fight. Only keep this Heraj's magic cancelled out, send him and

Mufaddal out there now, and give me a hundred more allies."

"That will still be two to one against thee," said Mihrjan, as the pair of plotters vanished.

"Naturally. More fun. And don't bring me a hundred of the djinn, either, but a hundred desert fighters or good tough Frankish champions. And see my other lads are weaponed properly."

"They await your orders in the forepart of the house," said Mihrjan resignedly.

"Then I'm off. El Sareuk, ready? Mihrjan, keep that fire-eating woman of mine out of the thick of things, will you? Come on, boys, up and at 'em!" He charged out toward the front door.

Mihrjan said to Ramizail, understanding her nature as well as she did herself, "Wouldst watch the battle, little one?"

"Oh, yes, Mihrjan, yes!"

"Then come." He gathered her in his monstrous, tender arms, and flying upward, caused their atoms to pass between those of the clay and timber, so that in a wink they were high above the earth, and hovered there comfortably, peering down on the tiny figures of Mufaddal's soldiers deploying around the house. Two standing by themselves and pointing this way and that with shouts unintelligible at this height, were the black-visaged Mufaddal himself, and his one-time potent sorcerer Heraj.

From the door issued a running

warrior, who at once engaged six men in dazzling swordplay; behind him came others, many others; until a hundred and fifty-five men had emerged. Hand-to-hand combats were joined all over the grounds. Ramizail cried out with delight.

IT was like observing two bands of toy soldiers endowed with the power to move and fight and maneuver. Both the girl and the djinni were enthralled. Godwin's force fanned out, coalesced, drove through Mufaddal's ranks and turned and came back and drove again, till the enemy broke and fled in hapless confusion. The Crusaders and Bedouins pursued them, hacking them down from behind, forcing them to stand and die in little knots. Two who fled toward the dock, casting away their weapons, Mihrjan pointed out as Mufaddal and Heraj. After them bounded a great figure in white, sky-blue, and gold, flourishing a long sword above its head. "Godwin!" said Ramizail, biting her nails with excitement. "Oh, Mihrjan, go lower! I want to see!"

The dijinni sank until their feet were no more than ten yards from the wharf. There they drifted along above the pursued pair.

Mufaddal panted out, "Only chance! Under the dock!"

Heraj gasped, "We might stand and fight him," with no conviction in his voice at all.

"Ha," said Mufaddal, and with one desperate leap plunged off the

wharf into the sea. Heraj was one step behind him. Godwin came to the edge and halted, baffled. Their heads did not show above the water.

"Mihrjan," whispered Ramizail, "they'll escape!"

"Observe," said the djinni equably. He gestured with a finger, and a section of the dock became transparent to her gaze. Beneath it, Heraj and his master were clambering up, dripping, onto a shelf of boards some twelve feet from the outer edge of the wharf. Godwin still scratched his head in bafflement. Obviously he could not see through the pier as she could.

The two conspirators crouched there, watching the sea apprehensively. "Now look," said Mihrjan. Ramizail, staring intent, saw a gray snout poke up into view behind them, followed by a multitude more. "Rats!" she breathed.

"Aye, rats. All those who live beneath the wharf, mistress, called here by the scent of their dinner."

It was as though the lead rat had given a signal. In a trice the legions of furred ghastly beings had poured over the two squatting men.

Screams of pain and horror came up through the boards of the upper dock. Heraj straightened as though to stand, cracked his head on the wharf, and sank down, half-conscious, into the midst of the swarming rodents. He gurgled and flung his arms in the air as their small sharp unclean teeth found his throat, his

belly, his eyes.

Mufaddal flung himself into the water. His *gallabiyyah* snagged on a projection, and held him fast, thrashing and squalling; only his head above water. For a wonder, the cheap cloth did not give way. The rats leaped down onto his head, slipping into the water, swimming back to tear at his face, perching on his bare head and clawing insanely at his scalp. And so, held helpless by the clutch of chance, Mufaddal died as hideous a death as anyone might have wished him.

EL SAREUK came up to Godwin. "What were those fearful sounds just now, companion?" he asked, wiping the sweat of honest battle from his lean bearded face.

"Mufaddal and Heraj, I take it, though how and where they died I can't tell."

Mihrjan settled to earth with Ramizail in his arms. "Lords," he boomed, setting the girl on her feet, "they perished in a niche beneath the wharf, as they should have perished, shut from the light of day, with the teeth of their own evil minions fastened in their gullets. Now is the stain they put upon Islam cleansed with a vengeance."

"By gad," said Godwin, as Yellow-eyes fluttered down to perch on his shoulder, "then it's finished, and as neat a case of poetic justice as ever came my way." He looked about him. Mihrjan had on his own initiative sent the Bedouins and Cru-

sadness back to their own places. Only corpses met his eye. "To horse, friends!" he bellowed gleefully. "This battle's done; and there are a power and lashing of wrongs left in the world to be righted!"

"Oh, heavens," groaned Ramizail. "Don't you even want to rest a week or two, swashbuckler?"

"Rest is for the dead and the aged, witch-wench."

El Sareuk nodded fiercely. "The work for willing swords is never done, lass."

Ramizail rolled up her beautiful eyes and shrugged, a slight smile of resignation on her full lips. Mihrjan pointed out their horses, saddled and champing at a little distance.

"O Lord of My Life, I know a wrong in Egypt that needs four, or it might be eight, strong hands," said he.

"We are in Egypt, by coincidence," said Ramizail.

"This Egypt lies three thousand years in the past," said Mihrjan.

"Can you transport us back?" asked Godwin eagerly.

"Assuredly, Sire."

"Well then, let's go!" he roared. He put an arm over the shoulder of El Sareuk and another about the slim waist of Ramizail, and ran them toward the horses. And Mihrjan's great laugh of fierce pleasure boomed thunderously through the desert air . . .

THE END

INTRODUCING The Author

★ *Rog Phillips* ★

(Concluded from Page 2)

power plant engineering, power plant construction—if I'd stayed in that I would have been at Pearl Harbor when the bombs fell. But I went into the shipyards and became a welder. The draft board and the shipyards fought over who was to have me to the very end, in an automatic type of war where I had no say either way.

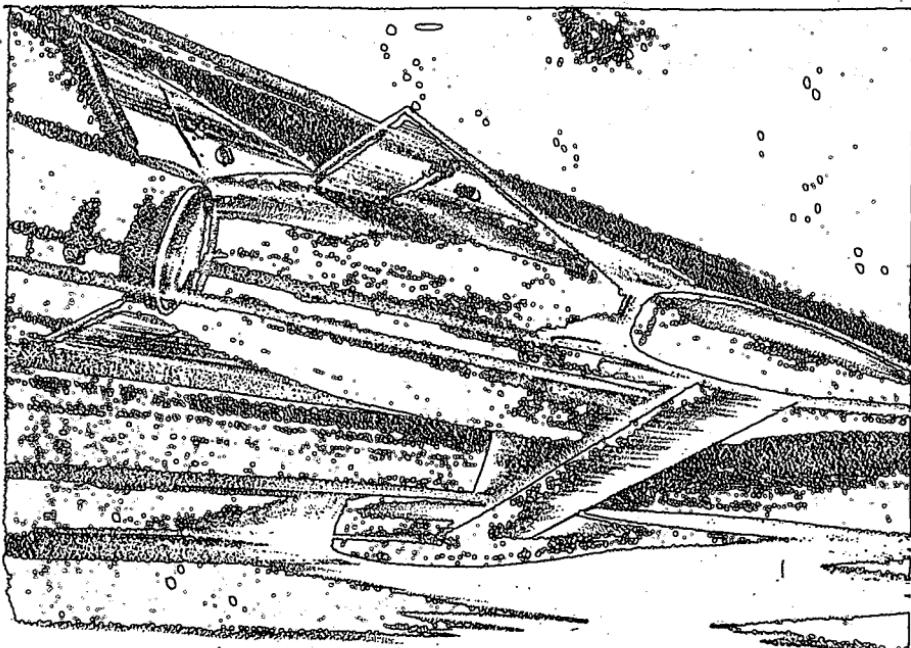
In my teens I did a lot of hitchhiking, seeing the country and working at anything that would give me a couple of bucks to move on. Later I did my travelling in my own car.

I've lived in so many cities and towns I couldn't list them all.

And oh yes, I was in the Spokane juvenile court for a few hours once until my mother could bail me out. I'd been selling papers on the street when I was under twelve years of age. Second offense. And once in a small town in Kansas I slept in jail all night because I was broke. I think I was sixteen at the time.

Which about sums things up. Except for my story in this issue of Madge. Hope you like it.

—Rog Phillips



Paradise Planet

By
Richard S. Shaver

It was a nice little world; everything about it reminded Steve of Earth — except for the people. They looked as human — as steel could make them! . . .

IT was a queer looking planet, great snakes or the tenuous flesh of some creature of the air. He hated As his ship approached it, Steve Donay could see slowly rising to think of setting down on that and twisting coils of strange smoke, world of surface fires. But what brown and silver and gold, like else was there to do? He was at



the end of his supplies, there wasn't fuel enough to look further. Maybe not enough to land safely. But he had to take a chance.

As he burst down through the coiling layers of strange smoke, the world beneath was amazingly beautiful. Wild, maybe, no—those were planted trees, those fields of grass were too regularly curved, too well laid out. He smiled. That brown stuff, he should have recognized it. It was weather control particles. He'd read about it somewhere. Magnetized particles. When you turned on the field, they gathered, shut out unwanted light. When you reversed, to negative field projection, they caused rain to condense. When you wanted the sun, they were swept aside by another repellent field . . . he should have recognized them. This was luck, a really civilized world.

He swept lower, his jets thrumming softly, reassuringly. Still perking, he could pick a good landing spot. There, beyond that huge tree group. And what trees they were. That meant an old culture, a good one. The temples crowning the hills, the peaceful meadows curving between, the lazy river—he caught his breath! This was a world, some place, indeed!

He set the little ship down near the great trees, and tested the air. It was normal, as he expected.

Not far away, on the edge of the meadow, was a house. It was a very nice looking farm house, with a tiny barn, two other small build-

ings, and a haystack. There were three cows, and a pen of hogs; a horse was in the barnyard. He left his ship and walked up the path to the door, marveling at the rows of flowers beside the path, and the neatness of the yard. No blade of grass seemed to grow out of place, no flower bloomed too boisterously. Even the birds in the trees seemed to partake of the discipline, singing in a soft and careful way, not to disturb the serene surroundings.

Steve knocked, and almost at once the upper part of the door swung inward. He stared, for he had not seen a woman in nearly two years. Not a beautiful woman like this! Cinematic, glamorous . . . he wondered if he wasn't in truth a little unbalanced from his long absence from humankind. No one could be quite that attractive! But when she spoke, something in his breast shrilled an alarm, and a chill ran up his spine. There was a brittle, edgy quality in her voice, like a crystal bell, yes—but a bell with a crack that was about to shatter.

"Vey fanis yu?" she asked.

He shook his head. "I'm from earth, another planet. We can't understand each other, I suppose—not until I learn your tongue."

She opened the bottom half of the door, and he walked into a room of quiet beauty. A large brown tile stove was nearby with a copper pot simmering, utterly spotless.

PICTURES were set in the walls, strangely epotic, realistic art work. Leather chairs, a wide wooden table, unmarred by scratches and nicks, cabinets of clear crystal behind which glimmered rows of gleaming dishes and goblets . . . It was like something from a Home-makers catalog—the home of the future. Yet there was a quality of timeless permanence in it all. It was as if it had been the same, unmoving, unchanged, and as if this woman had been poised at that door, waiting to open it for a visitor for endless centuries.

She poured a bowl of steaming broth, and smiling, set brown bread and yellow butter before him. He sat and ate, wolfishly; he had been on a capsule concentrate diet for months. She sat by the big tile stove and took up yarn and needles, went on with the knitting of a garment as he ate. He turned his eyes away. They were, of course, little booties for a tiny child.

That alarm in his breast had subsided, and he wondered what kind of idiot he had become to take alarm where such a home could exist. But nevertheless there was something, some brittle quality to the whole that he could not put his finger on. Some cold threat that he sensed but could not fathom. Yet . . . there was nothing but that it was all too idyllic! Too prosaic — no strange planet could be so much like home.

The weariness of the months of strain claimed him and he nodded

in his chair, waiting. She got up and beckoned to him, and beyond the first door she opened was a chamber, a bed made on the floor of soft hand-made quilts, silken and lovely. He fell across the bed in a heap and she went out, closing the door softly.

HOURS later he awoke, and darkness had come. He lay there, trying to remember what *She* had been wearing, feeling a little pang of jealousy that *She* must have a man, must be knitting that mate's child's clothing . . . She had worn some kind of clinging trousers, slacks—something . . . and across her perfect bosom had been crossed two wide bands of white that ended in a girdle around her small waist. Her throat and the cleft of her breasts had had a sheen like mother of pearl, and her bare arms soft and lovely as two dreams. Dreams! He cursed a little. Too many dreams had tormented him, these last starving months, eking out his dwindling food supply, waiting for something to come . . . some planet to appear in the endless black void where he could set his fuel-dry ship down and rest.

The door opened, and she came in, carrying a lamp—a primitive thing with a tiny flame. She set it down and stood smiling at him; and there was a magic on her, in her eyes and on her bare graceful arms, in the lovely curves of her body under the clinging garment.

Donay sighed. A man went to

the stars seeking perfection, adventure, magic . . . and when he found it, he found it was very like home, only better. It was like a perfect wife and a perfect farm and peace and contentment—bucolic magic—why had he left Earth?

As he got to his feet, one foot slipped on the smooth tile floor and he lurched suddenly against her. His first thought was—"My God, her condition . . ." but his second was a vague horror that began to grow in his mind. For her body was solid as a rock, unyielding. And the hand with which she seized his arm and steadied him was like the grasp of a pair of tongs of heavy steel!

The more he looked at her perfection, the more his mind worried at the problem—*How can she be so beautiful and yet be made of metal . . . yet be not human, yet be—yet be . . .* His mind would not accept it—*yet be a robot?* She could not be of flesh and blood like himself, not . . . like that . . . He shuddered inwardly.

The evening meal was a feast of berries and thick cream, fresh bread and the beautiful yellow butter, slabs of something fried . . . fried . . . he remembered, like panhaus, like scrapple—like the Dutch cooked.

He ate and leaned back satisfied. Then she brought a heavy blue wine from a door he guessed was a cellar way, and he drank. And the wine opened his lips, and he asked, "How can we understand each other,

strange woman of steel?"

She smiled at the weird sounds of his mouth, and answered, "Ven nu da, uman. En nu see me."

Somehow he knew what she meant. When he got to Heaven he would understand life, but not until. That seemed to be what she meant. She nodded, as if that was close enough. He wondered, that alarm in his breast tugging at his nerves, setting his eyes to roving for the jaws of the trap he felt about him.

Days passed, and his wonder increased. It was like living in a mirror, or in an instant of frozen time. It was idyllic, yet . . . nothing happened! The beautiful creature was alone here, with her few cows and animals; the garden and the cows produced her living. The cellar was full of stored food, and she seemed to possess everything one could want . . . *except change*. One day was exactly like another.

No one came. No one left. The smoky sky overhead coiled and uncoiled those odd clouds; the sun shone . . . a large red sun, warm . . . but not too warm. No one came. No one left. There was himself, puzzling, thinking. There was the calm woman, beautiful as a picture, busy as a housewife, making everything sweet and clean and comfortable for . . . Steve Donay?

And Donay couldn't stand it. Out there sat his ship, unharmed, unsmashed. All it needed was fuel. And he couldn't pull himself out onto that meandering road that

went over the hill and look for the civilization behind this little farm house and this perfect . . . robot.

IT was then he gave up trying to learn her language. Gave up waiting for the neighbors, for contact with intelligent members of her race. She could not be a living creature, and she could not be even flesh. She must be some kind of maintenance robot . . . and Donay shivered. What lay over the hill? If even the tiny farms of this world were peopled with maintenance robots, what wonders lay over the hill?

Then he wondered where were the produce trucks to take away the milk, the butter, the fruit and vegetables? And even as he wondered, his feet took him at last out of the clutching beauty and peace and neat contentment of that little home. His feet led him along that road, winding over the hill.

Looking back, he saw *Her* standing in the doorway, the upper part swung open, her eyes even at this distance seeming blurred with tears. She waved one hand, a little gesture of farewell, and that snowy apron she wore over her strange spotless garments came up to her face. She was weeping!

With a tug at his heart as strange as any emotion he ever knew, he realized the creature was weeping to see him go! But he made an effort, and his mind assured him it was but a trick of his own fleshly

emotions, that that woman of the steel-hard lovely form was not able to weep, or to do anything but tend her cows and weed her garden and can her fruits and open the door to any knock that came. She must be a robot, his mind said. But his heart shouted—*She is woman, perfection in womanhood, and you are leaving your home!*

His feet led on, and he reached the top of the hill and sat down to look over the view that spread out beneath his eyes. There were other farmsteads, very like the one he had just left. Dotted here and there were herds of cattle. The whole land lay dreaming under his eyes, and he knew the mist of the far horizon only shut off a repetition of the same thing. But hope led him on, and he rose and went along a little used trail.

Days, it took, to reach the city. The farmsteads lay dreaming as he passed, and he knocked on the lovely old wood of the doors sometimes, and asked for water or food. The upper door would open, and there would stand a woman. Not the same woman, but very like, too much alike—too much like his own first woman. She would smile and say: "Vey, fanis yu?"

He would shake his head, make a motion of drinking or eating and the lower door would open. He would enter and sit at the wooden table. The food was always perfect, sublime taste, simple fruit or milk or garden greens, or the fried panhaus, or sometimes a thing that

looked like meat but he was sure was not meat for *She* had never killed anything or possessed any meat.

Then there were no more of the farmsteads, and he came across a great empty plain, where the trail was wide and the earth beaten hard as stone. But nowhere did he see the vehicles that had made that track. In the distance he could see the tall spires of a city. But there was no noise of a city. The tall spires seemed silent, and there was none of that smoke he knew a city should make. Above the spires coiled the weird spirals of the upper air, like great brown snake forms, gestating and birthing and changing, entwined and unentwining, wreathing over each other and seeming to peer down at the strange midget crossing their plain.

Steve Donay was puzzled trying to understand this planet. His feet plodded on across the grassy plain and he came to the first street of the city. There were people moving, and he went on eagerly for now he would learn the truth from real people!

He went up to the first man he saw and asked: "I am a stranger, can you tell me . . . ?"

The man said firmly, "Vey fanis vu?"

Donay shook his head, and the man walked on, not swiftly, not hurriedly, but with a measured, machine-like step.

THE city did not seem crowded, and there were some huge

freight vehicles trundling along, not like autos, but like huge wagons with little motors where a man would ordinarily sit driving a horse. And there was no man driving them.

"I am beginning to understand," Steve muttered, "this is a world of madmen, or simpletons, or robots. Why does no one act curious, or sympathetic, or human? . . ." He walked on, gloomily.

Near the center of the city, many plodding hours later, he walked into the base of one of the great towers. There was a door he suspected was an elevator and he went in and pressed a button. It took him to the top. He got out and entered the first door he came to.

A woman sat behind a desk. She said, "Vey fanis vu?"

Donay said "Nuts," and slapped her face. She promptly rose from her seat and knocked him down. When he arose he found a man on either side of him. They gripped his arms with fingers of steel and led him from the room, back down the tower and out on the street. He gathered this was very unusual, for three different people along the way stopped to glance curiously at him. His face was very sore where the woman had struck him. She had a hand like a lead pipe.

The men took him into a place just across the square from the tower he had entered. In and up the elevator and into a great chamber.

Steve saw a very big bed. The person in the bed was very small.

Very old, too. He said, "Vey fanis vu?"

Donay shrugged dispiritedly and answered, "From Earth, and I don't like this planet of yours a little bit."

The little man in the bed smiled a very human smile and reached out to a thing beside the bed and turned a knob. A glow came from the box, and Steve could suddenly hear a thought—"From earth, eh? I wonder now where that would be if you could tell me."

Startled, Steve thought where earth was and the little old creature in the bed nodded. Then Donay asked, "Why does every one act so odd . . . like robots, or like they were wound up and couldn't stop or change . . . ?"

The old man sighed and leaned back. "That is a long story, stranger. Sit down and I will try to explain . . . "

Donay sat down and listened. The thought in his head told him of a great world of people who had become very tired of everything and wanted to have something new. They did not want to die. They wanted life to be more satisfying, wanted to be more contented. The old man smiled sadly. "There arose among them a great scientist who promised them immortality and contentment. He had devised a treatment . . . "

The old man leaned back and looked at Donay. His eyes were tragic. "That's what ails the people, Steve. Donay. They're treated . . . and the treatment did every-

thing he said it would. It's really a new factor introduced into the human metabolism. You know something of chemistry?"

Steve Donay nodded. The old man went on, wearily. "Well, you know how complicated the protoplasm molecule is, then. This change he introduced is only a new atom in the basic living molecule. As if, say, you're making pancakes and put in more shortening . . ." the old man laughed. "When I make pancakes they swell up, like balloons. This is the opposite effect. The yeasty growth of life is changed, subdued, altered into a new pattern, by a single new ingredient in the chemical transversion in the body. The end product, the basic plasm-cule, is more stable, less affected by adverse conditions, a lot more durable. But it isn't what I call life! You've noticed?"

Steve nodded. "They act like robots," he observed, sadly. "I'd like to get some fuel, get back to my own world."

THE old man scribbled some notes on a pad, nodded. "They will synthesize your fuel. I'll put through a requisition for it. Now, they may ask you if you want the treatment. It's tempting, because it gives you a life cycle, from birth through fecundity to death, of around ten times the ordinary cycle. Almost immortality, you would think. But I refrained, and now I'm the only one left of the old race. The new race is not flesh!"

IMAGINATION

"I'll refuse, too," Steve observed.
"They pay for their long lives."

The old man nodded sagely. "Things happen ten times as slowly, although to the eye they move as rapidly as before. The drive toward growth and progress is lessened by ten, to my eyes. They're satisfied to go on at the new slow pace."

"**S**TASIFIED, you mean," Steve grinned. The old man smiled. "How come they made you their ruler?" asked Steve.

"I'm not the ruler. They believe I am the only one capable of understanding you, a flesh man."

Steve stood up. "What'll I do with myself while I'm waiting for that fuel order to go through?"

"Look around, take in the sights. You can sleep here, there's an extra room in this suite. I'm lonesome, you can talk to me when you have time."

Steve looked into the other rooms of the suite, came back to stand beside the old man's bed. The old fellow rang a bell, and one of the beautiful creatures came and looked in the door.

"Our Earth visitor wants to take in the sights," started the old man, in the "Vey fanis vu?" language, but Steve understood because the thought augmenter was still switched on. "You get this memorandum onto a requisition slip and see that they make some fuel for his ship, so he can go back to his natural world. He doesn't like your new order any better than I do."

The girl, who looked a brisk, ef-

ficient and ripe eighteen, beckoned to Steve. He followed her from the room. She closed the door softly, carefully, stood leaning against it, eyeing Steve. She murmured, "U seen yung to bay," but Steve shook his head, and she went ahead of him into another room. There was no one there, but one of the thought machines stood on a pedestal beside several other machines. She switched on the augmenter and Steve heard her thought, like slow, perfect music on a thrilling harp . . . "You are here too short a time to judge what you like and dislike. Let me show you what the change has given us before you refuse a chance to be like us."

Steve shook his head, murmured, "Not interested. Peddle it somewhere else."

She appeared not to hear him. Her thought went on, inexorable, beautiful, without a ripple of irritation or haste: "The change was not brought about in a day, Earthman. Nor are we finished, ever, with attempts to make life more worth having. Our people hated the change, at first. Centuries passed before it was fully demonstrated to be a far more pleasant and satisfying way of life. You cannot judge this thing with ordinary standards. We accomplish just as much as before, without the frenetic hub-bub that we once thought necessary."

Steve smiled, as if he owned a secret she could never see. "I'd rather be dead, than turned into a damned robot."

THE girl moved toward him, her face pale and perfect as a prize rose. "Look into my eyes, foolish one . . ." she whispered, and her thought in his mind was a bold invitation. He looked into the deep green-blue depths and he saw there real emotion, waiting to be borne into a consuming fire of passion. Her arms went around him, and though they were strong and hard arms, he did not feel that, for her lips touched his, and a shock of ecstasy ran through him so that he shook like a leaf in a breeze.

Her thoughts plunged on—he had to listen—"You think we are dead robots because you do not see our life. You cannot see it, until you are one of us. Then it becomes quite clear, our life is more than before."

Steve's thoughts, unlocked from sad introspection and loneliness, plunged suddenly into a swirl of desire. He could not help wishing to see her body without the sleek rippling film of silk. He could not help wondering if the bodies of these machine-like people were as perfect as their faces were perfect. She laughed as the machine augmented his inadvertent wish . . . and she zipped down her side, tossed off the one piece jumper of silken stuff. She stood there, perfect and desirable.

Steve flushed. "That wasn't necessary, baby," he heard himself say, embarrassed. "I couldn't help wishing."

"More you can never have, while

you are made of flesh. My arms would crush you, my lips burst your soft flesh lips. But if you underwent the treatment . . ." she smiled. Her meaning was unmistakable, too much so and Steve flushed, guiltily.

He heard his own thought on the augmenter, going on and on inexorably, against his own will: "There was a woman, the first I knew in this world. I stayed there too long. She wanted me, but we could not even speak. Somehow, I feel drawn back to her. And the thing that puzzled me, that terrified me . . . she was knitting baby clothes, yet there was no man! No man ever came, there was only me. And I never even touched her, except by chance."

The girl slipped her jumper on, zipped it up. Her face was suddenly grave, empty, and somehow sorry. Steve stopped thinking, listened to the augmenter and her thoughts. "Oh, no! I am sorry I intruded."

Steve shook his head. He was trying hard not to understand the meaning of what he heard. It was like being led by the hand, like a child trying to break away from his mother's restraining hand.

"What do you mean, you're sorry you intruded?"

She smiled, a very peculiar smile, one of those female smiles that madden men so much, because they show him that sometimes women know things that men can never know.

"You will understand one of these days, why I am sorry. I should have known. If I had looked I would have seen it in you already. It changes a man . . . but you could not understand. It was inevitable. You were doomed when you set foot on this world." She laughed, and repeated, "Doomed, doomed," and she went out the door, a silvery laugh like a glass bell struck with a felt hammer.

STEVE stood looking at the augmenter. He leaned over it, and his own thought beat back at him powerfully. "Go back, go back, or you will never escape! You will be another robot, with flesh like rock, and never again will the hot blood rush through your veins, never again . . ." But all at once he saw behind his own thought, and heard something deeper in his own mind, saying, "Go back, *she* is waiting for you. The garden is waiting, the little house, the fields, the tiny barn, the tidy rooms, and her sweet perfection to serve you forever."

Steve stood up, and pounded his head with his fist, trying to knock out the sound of his own thinking. There was something here, something threatening and frightful, and he couldn't understand. He let the thought augmenter idle on, emptily bouncing his own thought about the room in magnetic waves of meaningless content, and peered at the other strange machines. There was one, a cabinet where a person could stand, with buttons

like a shower stall. He stepped in, pushed a button and waves of force washed over him, set his body to tingling and shaking with the force of it. But what it was supposed to be doing, he didn't know. Beside it was suspended a bottle with a spigot and a paper cup. It looked like water, and without thinking he took the cup, filled it, tasted the "water". It was not water; it tasted like peppermint, like licorice, like mint leaves and whiskey . . . like quite a drink, he decided and drank it down. He took another cup, and another. His head suddenly whirled, and he staggered slightly.

"Potent stuff to put in a water cooler," he grunted, putting out a hand to steady himself. For the stuff had set up a thrumming in his veins, a pumping in his heart, a rosy pulsation in his vision. If he wasn't drunk, what would you call it? he wondered. He tried a step, another, and after minutes his legs obeyed and he walked out the door. He stopped there, looking back. In this condition he would forget his own name . . . He wondered what he had forgotten. Something he had left there . . . He eased back, sliding his feet, bent over the augmenter to listen to his thinking. It beat up at him from the orifice like a strong wind in his face. It said, "You're going back, Steve, you are going back, to say goodbye properly to your host, the woman who waits and knits and waits and who wept when you left."

Steve decided he was going back. They would bring the fuel when they brought it, or they wouldn't. But somehow right now he had to see that "Vey fanis vu?" female again, to make sure about something that puzzled him.

Then his thought reminded him. "You forgot to switch off this thing, that's why you came back in." And he reached down and turned the knob; the pulse of his own strange deeper thought stopped, and he felt suddenly lost and his own mind blank. He moved back, turned, went out the door and heard a silvery laugh down the corridor as he staggered a little, trying to walk down the center of the corridor.

"Inhuman things," Steve muttered. "They treat me like I was a kid with no sense, or something," and he went to the elevator, down to the street level, and so along the street, some sense of direction guiding his whirling mind. He knew where he was going.

ONE of the driverless wheeled wagons stopped beside him, the machine-voice of it said, "You may ride, I am going your way."

Steve climbed on the back of the wagon, grumbling. "How'n hell do you know where I'm going? I don't!"

The wagon rolled off, not fast, not slow, its wheels bouncing slightly with the weight of its bales and boxes of cargo. Along the wide serene avenues it rolled, quiet, sure, straight as a train on rails. Steve

nodded, closed his eyes, fell asleep.

When he awoke, the wagon had stopped, someone brushed by Steve, took off one of the boxes. It was dark, the starlight was so vague he could not see where he was. The wagon started up again, rolled on. Steve slept; and dreamed that he had been changed into a glass statue, and placed on a pedestal in the square of his home town, back on Earth. People stopped and stared at the glass statue, giggling and smirking, and he hated it, but he could only stand there, his hand on his chest, smiling idiotically. He could hear the girls giggling, saying to each other, "Isn't he perfect? He doesn't know, he doesn't know."

Steve stood there in the square and the traffic turned and honked and braked; the people stood and waited for the traffic lights, and looked at the glass statue, and smiled, as if he were a joke, a permanent joke. "He doesn't know," they would laugh, and the light would change, and the traffic move again.

Hours later a hand touched his arm; but it wasn't a hard hand of steel. It was a soft human hand, and Steve's heart leaped with the guess: "Some of these people didn't undergo the change and formed their own community. So the crystallized people sent me to the natural people, and now I am among my own kind again!"

The soft pink-tipped fingers grasped his arm, shook him gently, so gently, and Steve opened his eyes. The face in the darkness was vague.

ly familiar, but somehow all these people were nice looking. He eased himself off the back of the wagon, leaned against the body that belonged to the hand. A soft body, a woman's real body of flesh . . . he thrilled to the touch; a deep satisfying revelation of humanity, of love, of natural human life, a home-like feeling.

"So they didn't all change. There is a place here where they live like people . . ." murmured Steve.

"U fanis hane, O tu!" said the voice, a sweet voice, from a fragrant-scented person, a soft bodied woman-person . . . Steve smiled sleepily. She seemed glad to see him. He followed her up a path, and into the warm pink light.

A shock went through him. This was the same room! The same pictures built in the smooth wall, the same brown tile stove, sleek and clean as a new-washed baby. The same big comfortable leather chairs, and he grinned. "I'm hungry, Elvie," he said.

"A hane to u, is eat," she laughed, and he knew she had spoken two words of his own tongue.

He sat down, not weary, but somehow very glad to be back. "The thought machine," he asked, wishing he could ask her where they could find one; he wanted her to tell him something.

She switched on a button in the wall, a button he had not seen before. Her thought came to him then.

"I was so sorry I did not have

one when you came. I ordered one, but they have to be made as there are not many in use. Now it has come, I can tell you. There is something you could not understand."

"There's a lot of things you could tell me; that's a fact. It's so puzzling. They take me for granted. No excitement . . ."

"That is because of prevision."

Steve started. A shiver went through him, or was it a pulse of delight at the sudden knowledge of what was to come?

"Prevision?" asked Steve, though he suddenly realized he knew the answer.

"After the change, people came to know by experience that they could foresee the future, when they willed to see ahead. When you came, I knew what would come to pass."

"Because they know what's coming, they didn't get excited?" Steve asked, his eyes on her sweet perfection, on her hands, setting the flowers straight in the bowl again, then going back to her eternal knitting.

"That's why we seem like robots to you. Robots don't have to think about what's coming next. They know. They know because they are machines. We know ahead, too, not because it's built in us, but because we can deduce precisely how things are going to turn out. The penalty of increased mental activity . . . see?" Her voice was gentle, but there was awareness of something in-

it, something he ought to understand, something she couldn't say.

SUDDENLY Steve saw it and sat up straight, his heart doing flip-flops. He could hear his voice and his augmented thought shouting together—"There's no man! You're alone here!"

Her smile was heavenly, something like music that touched him inside.

"Now you know," she said, and held up the tiny garment she had just completed. "It's for our first one."

Steve leaned-back, his worriment smoothing out into a strange beautiful prevision of their life, going on and on here . . . He couldn't seem to get excited about Earth any longer. All the dreams of going back seemed to be dissolving in a warm flood of knowing—he *wasn't going back!*

"This prevision can be fun," mused Steve, looking into her eyes. "You knew . . ."

"I knew when your ship sounded overhead! It added up, because . . . I don't know. When I saw you, then I saw the prevision had not been wishful thinking. It was you, the same man I saw ahead. So I began making the things . . ."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Steve asked.

"It wasn't that way. You had to go and see the city, undergo the change, want to come back. If you hadn't wanted to come back, why then I had made a mistake. But

you came back, so . . . but I knew all the time."

"I knew too, but . . . there was your knitting. I thought you must have a mate, that he must be away."

"In the flesh state, people have previsión, but it isn't as accurate. Ours is usually accurate. Just a new faculty. One of several new faculties."

"I suppose they will treat me?" Steve asked, but he knew.

Gently she explained —. "In the city, the change is provided for. It is in the drinking water. Here, we have to take capsules. If we didn't we'd revert to the flesh state. No one wants to revert."

Steve stood up. She moved into his arms naturally, and he knew he was home. He kissed her sweet face . . . again. Her laugh tinkled softly, and the edgy, glass-like quality was gone from it. He was happy and he knew she was happy. He switched off the thought augmenter.

"Let's pretend it's the first day . . ." he said.

She went and stood by the door, and he went out the door. He closed it and knocked. She opened the door.

"Vey fanis vu?" she asked.

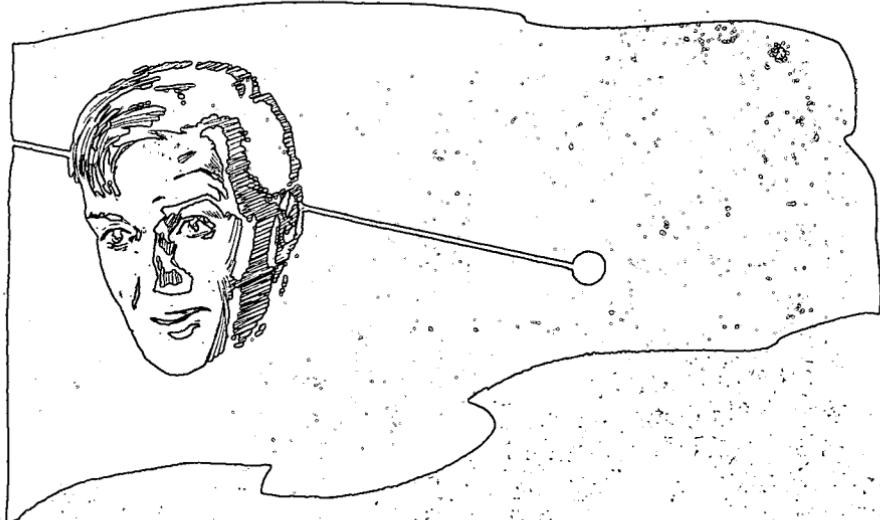
Steve stood, adoring her, his eyes warm. "How can a guy be so dumb, not to know when he finds his own home?" he asked in English.

"I wondered, Steve?" she murmured, in English.

She opened the lower door . . .

THE END





The Lost Ego

By

Rog Phillips

He knew he existed — even to the point of knowing his own name. But to really exist you have to have a body — and he couldn't find his!

66 So what if I did spend this week's household allowance getting drunk last night!"

I stared at the woman. For a brief second I had felt that she was my wife. But I had never seen her before. I looked at her. She was a straw blonde, rather pretty in a way.

"Give me some more money, you cheapskate," she sneered. "I don't know why I ever married you. I could pick up a half a dozen any night that are more fun than you ever were."

She couldn't be talking to me. I looked around to see who she was talking to. I was standing on the

-rug of a living room. No one else was in the room except us.

"All right," I heard myself say. My voice startled me, it was so quiet, so calm and patient. I'd heard someone speak just that way once. Who was it? I remembered suddenly. It was when I was six years old. I was in the neighborhood store when it was held up. The hold-up man had pointed a gun at Mr. Kaseline. Mrs. Kaseline had run into the store from in back and screamed at the man with the gun. He had shot her, then ordered Mr. Kaseline to hand over his money. I had been crouched against the wall, watching. Mr. Kaseline had looked down at his dead wife. Then he looked at the hold-up man, and said, "All right," in that same tone. Then he had opened the cash register and from somewhere in its depths brought out a gun and started firing at the man. He had kept on shooting until his gun clicked on an empty chamber . . .

"How much do you want?" I asked.

She blinked at me, a worried frown creasing her forehead. I sensed a stab of fear go through her. She averted her eyes uncomfortably. "Whatever you want to give me," she said sullenly.

It was weird. I had never seen her before in my life. I had no idea who she could be. Whoever she was, I didn't like her.

I looked about the room, once more. I couldn't recognize a single thing. I tried to. I studied things

like the davenport, the pictures on the wall. Nothing was familiar.

I became conscious of her eyes studying me with a mixture of expectancy and fear, tinged with a little finger of contempt that was ready to run if I looked her way. Anger, and irritation flooded into me. I had to get out, to think.

"I'll be back in a few minutes," I said, starting toward the front door.

"Where are you going?" she asked sharply.

I stopped and turned toward her slowly. That calmness was in my voice again as I listened to it. "To try to borrow some money," I said.

I opened the front door and went out, closing it gently behind me. I was on a porch of red enameled concrete. There were three steps down to the walk. I had never seen them before.

IT was evening. Somewhere down the block a woman was calling someone named Johnny. Across the street a man was going up the walk to the house from his car. Next door a skinny man with a large Adam's apple was mowing the lawn. He saw me and waved at me. A nervous smile flitted over her lips.

"Hi, Orville," he called.

But my name wasn't Orville, and I had never seen these houses, these people. I had never before been in this neighborhood.

Or had I? Was it possible to have amnesia while in familiar surroundings?

I considered the possibility, then rejected it. I was positive I had never been here before. I was certain my name wasn't Orville.

I knew who I was, and I knew my name was Fred Martin. Why, ten minutes ago I had been . . .

The man across the street had just opened the door to enter the house, but now neither he nor the house were there. In their place was Thordsen's bench. Around me were the dim outlines of the lab.

I tried to remember what I had been doing. I turned to my bench and groped for the light switch.

Light bathed my bench. I looked at the scattered parts of the computer, and grunted with relief. Of course! I had come back to the lab after dinner to work some more.

I started to take off my coat. Sudden doubt made me pause. I went slowly over to the corner medicine cabinet and looked at my reflection. My face looked back at me. I needed a shave. But my face was familiar. It was undoubtedly mine. Still . . .

I groped in my coat pocket and found it empty. I patted my hip pocket, and took out my wallet. I flipped it open and searched the driver's license for my name.

The name written there was Orville Snyder.

In that moment a strange emotion of detachment settled upon me. Almost disinterestedly I looked at other identifications. Each bore the signature of Orville Snyder.

Yet I was not Orville Snyder. I

was Fred Martin . . .

"Now look here, Fred," I said aloud. "Something's wrong." I grinned, but I knew it wasn't funny.

I went to the mirror again and studied my face. It was the same face I had seen there a minute before. I tried to detach myself, to make it seem a strange face. I couldn't. It was my own face.

I went back to my bench and frowned down at the scattered parts. Tube banks, condensers, resistors, switches. I had laid them out myself before going out to eat, so they would be ready when I returned.

"Now let's see," I said aloud. "I distinctly remember laying them out. Thordsen was talking to me at the time. We were discussing the feedback principle in this circuit. Then he left. I went to the supply room to get that extra tube tank. Then I went out to . . . to . . ."

I had come to a blank wall in my memory. I couldn't remember going out.

I knew I had been here before I was in that room with the strange woman. I was sure of that. Then I had gone out on the porch and the man next door had called me Orville. Then I had been here, with no passage of time between the two. Just a fading out and fading in—like they do with some scene changes on television.

And in my hand was a wallet with identifications for Orville Snyder. One of them—I turned to it and studied it again—said he was an employee of Rexlo Research Cor-

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poration with the classification of scientist.

But I was an employee of Rexlo Research with the classification of scientist—and there were only two others with that classification, Thordsen and Mintner. We three worked in this lab. No one else. Certainly no one by the name of Orville Snyder. Unless—I smiled uneasily — unless I were Orville Snyder.

I WENT over to my bench and sat down, cupping my chin on my fists. I tried to reason it out. My memories were perfectly clear. I went over them again and again, trying to find something significant.

It was possible I had never left the lab. That scene with the strange and unlikeable woman could have been an illusion. Maybe I fell asleep and dreamed it, then woke up.

That didn't explain the "proof" in my wallet that I was a man named Orville whom I had never heard of before, but the only other explanation of the blanks was that I had blanked out on leaving the lab, and once again while standing on the porch of that house.

I searched the wallet, hoping to find something. There were two one dollar bills. There was a folded slip of paper with some names on it, with figures denoting money after them. At the top were two capital letters. I.O. The meaning was obvious. Orville Snyder owed these men those sums of money.

I thumbed through the identifi-

cations for the nth time. On some of them was a telephone number. I got up and went over by the door to the desk with the telephone, and dialed the number.

The phone at the other end rang three times, then a voice said, "Hello?"

It was the voice of the woman. I didn't say anything.

"Who is it?" she said. Then she chuckled. "I know who it is. You don't need to worry, Ben. He isn't home. It is you, isn't it Ben?"

I hung up. Her voice had been unreal. Even her words. The pattern surrounding this Orville Snyder was too trite and too unbelievable. A wife—or was this woman his wife?—who used the grocery money to get drunk, and who consorted with men named Ben, and stupidly gave herself away over the phone.

I went back to my bench again and studied the identifications in the wallet. One of them had fingerprints on it. I didn't know much about fingerprints. Still . . .

I lit a bunsen burner and adjusted it until it was giving off smoke. I let a film of black coat a piece of glass. When it was safely cool I touched it with my right index finger and placed my fingerprint on a sheet of paper.

In the desk I found a magnifying glass. With it I examined my print and that on the identification, for the right index finger. In every respect they seemed identical.

I laid the magnifying glass down slowly. Things were adding up.

Things that couldn't be denied. The driver's license was a photostat copy and seemed authentic. The government identification card with the fingerprints on it was encased between sheets of plastic that sealed it. The Rexlo identification was on a printed card. And there was a hospital card giving blood type.

All this added up to my being Orville Snyder. I hadn't ever heard the name before. I'd never seen that woman before. I was Fred Martin. I was as certain of that as I could ever be of anything.

But I had to be Orville Snyder. I couldn't get out of it. The fingerprint, the man next door who had called me Orville, the woman who ranted at me as only a wife of that type can rant to a man.

I was Fred Martin and I knew I was Fred Martin. But I was Orville Snyder. I couldn't go any further. I didn't see how anyone could go any further.

Suppose I went to a psychiatrist and told him all this? What explanation would he give? He would obviously say I was insane. Perhaps I was, but it didn't seem so.

The thing didn't seem to fit conventional patterns. The only thing a psychiatrist might sink his teeth into was Orville's impossible marital situation. The psychiatrist might say the situation was so intolerable that Orville Snyder was becoming a schizo, and retreating into an identity called Fred Martin.

But that was absurd. Such an identity would be fictitious. It

wouldn't hold up under critical examination.

"To hell with the work I was going to do," I said. I snapped off the lights over my bench and returned the magnifying glass to the desk, switching off that light, and left the lab.

OUTSIDE, I found my car where I had left it. I took out my keys and unlocked it, and slipped in behind the wheel. A moment later I was gliding along familiar streets, taking familiar turns.

I put my car in a familiar garage behind an apartment house. I climbed familiar steps to a familiar door, unlocked it, and went in, turning on the lights.

This was where I lived. I went to the bookshelves and picked a book at random and opened it. There was my bookplate pasted in it, with my name, Fred Martin, in Gothic letters. I put the book back, and went into the kitchen. I was hungry.

I took the last of a beef roast from the refrigerator and cut some slices for a sandwich or two. I took them to the table and went back to the refrigerator for a glass of milk.

I sat down and bit into a sandwich. This was where I lived. I was Fred Martin. This business of Orville Snyder was crazy. I took a swallow of cold milk and felt better.

I took another bite of the sandwich and laid it down on the plate,

and reached for the newspaper—then stopped.

Where had the newspaper come from?

I hadn't stopped on the way from the lab to buy one. I hadn't brought one up with me from the car—or had I?

Suddenly I wasn't sure. I could have. If it wasn't for this other business I wouldn't have thought anything of it.

I stared at the folded newspaper, and it lay there on the plastic table-cloth with abnormally sharp detail, the most bizarre element of the day's mad events.

I relaxed. There was something in the paper, of course. If I spread it out and looked at the headlines I would probably go screaming mad . . .

That must be it, because I didn't want to open up the paper. Instead, I wanted to get up and go down to the car, and drive out of the city, away from everything, and forget everything.

The other things were strange and inconsistent, but not insane. This feeling was irrational. Maybe it was caused by the other things.

Just leaving the newspaper there and running away wouldn't resolve anything. I had to open it up and read it. And of course I knew what the headlines would be. There was only one thing they could be to fit the insane pattern: MRS. ORVILLE SNYDER FOUND SLAIN. And the subhead would be: POLICE SEARCHING FOR MISSING

HUSBAND.

But it was absurd. I took another bite of sandwich and a swallow of milk and stared at the folded newspaper. An idea was forming in my thoughts. It was vague and almost unreachable, but it was there.

I turned it over slowly. Somehow there must be an explanation for all this. I was Fred Martin and I couldn't be Orville Snyder, but I must be. Somewhere in that lay the key to something. And if I could reach that key I wouldn't have to open the paper and read the headlines. Why?

Because the newspaper wouldn't be there. Neither would I. I could be—where would I want to be? Back in Mr. Kaseline's store? Definitely not. Back in college? Why did I think of escaping into the past? As soon as I asked myself the question I knew why. It was because I couldn't think of any place else to mentally escape to.

Physically—I could get up and go down to the garage and get in my car and go anywhere.

And neither alternative was what I felt lay there, just under the surface. Perhaps neither was possible. How could I go back into the past and make it anything more than just memories of the past? And if I were wanted for murder it would be highly improbable that I could escape the police for very long. Not when my fingerprints were those of Orville Snyder.

No. What I was sensing, but not quite able to reach, was something

else. And I didn't know what it was.

FINISHED my two sandwiches and glass of milk. Leaving the newspaper untouched on the table, I undressed and took a hot bath. In bed, I lay in the darkness, my eyes open, thinking.

I was Orville Snyder, and I had killed my wife. After I had killed her something had snapped, blotting out all memory of the deed. I definitely couldn't remember killing that woman! When that something snapped I became a schizo and took the identity of Fred Martin. Unfortunately I couldn't make the schizo switch perfect.

On the other hand, I was Fred Martin. I lived in a bachelor apartment and had been living there for three years. My car was down in the garage in back of the apartment house. My books with my name in them were on the bookshelves gathering dust. I had never heard of Orville Snyder until today.

I turned over on my side and watched the vague light seeping past the drapes over the window. A slight breeze was tugging at the drapes, sending a breath of fresh air into the room. I had bought those drapes three years ago. They'd been cleaned twice since then, and would need cleaning again soon. Mrs. Bricher was the landlady and her husband Ed ran a beer truck.

And I didn't know a damned thing about Orville Snyder.

I sat up and put my feet on the

floor, letting them grope for my slippers and get into them without turning on the light. I padded out of the bedroom and across the living room where the moonlight made things quite visible but indistinct.

In the kitchen I turned on the light and got a glass of milk. Then I stood by the table looking at the folded newspaper, drinking the milk in sporadic gulps.

"To hell with it!" I said.

Purposely I went to the sink and rinsed out the empty glass. Then I put it in the drying rack and went back to the table. I picked up the newspaper and unfolded it. My eyes went to the headlines. The letters were big and black and sharply distinct.

I started to read, and the first word became indistinct. The letters were still clear and sharp, but I could not read them.

I grinned. I had had dreams where I tried to read, and the words did that. Maybe I had gone to sleep and was just dreaming I was in the kitchen trying to read the headlines.

Of course that was it. I had to wake up. How did you wake up when you knew you were asleep and wanted to wake up? I had done that, too, and it was easy. You just woke up.

I did.

IT was light. Not bright, but the vague light of the first blush of dawn. The rheumatism in my right shoulder woke up a second or two

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after I did—but I had never had rheumatism in my life! Startled, I jerked an elbow under me and rose up.

Beside me, still asleep, lay a woman. She had gray hair. It was done up in tight curls held in place with bobby pins, and made her look bald headed.

I stared at her for one preternatural second, then groaned, "Oh Lord!" and sank back on my pillow.

The woman stirred in her sleep. She opened her eyes, and I closed mine quickly, pretending to be asleep, waiting for her to scream in alarm at the strange man in her bed.

Instead, she patted my cheek gently. "Dave," I heard her say. "It's five-thirty. Time to put the water on for coffee."

I sighed deeply, pretending to wake up, and got out of bed without looking at her. I felt her eyes on my back as I stumbled toward the door and temporary escape from her inquiring eyes. The rheumatism in my right shoulder was throbbing painfully.

I had never seen the living room before. It was furnished with things that were well kept, but out of style. It wasn't my living room. Nevertheless I crossed it to the kitchen and quietly searched cupboards until I found the dripolator and a kettle that was obviously used for heating the coffee water. I filled it and placed it over a gas flame.

Not until then did I let myself think. I was Fred Martin. I must

remember that. There was strong evidence that I was Orville Snyder with a no-good wife who might be either alive or murdered. Now—I took a deep breath—who else was I?

There was a mirror hanging on the wall beside the breakfast table. I could look at myself in it. Or would my face blur like the type on those headlines I had been dreaming about?

The gray haired woman had called me Dave.

I went to the mirror and looked at my reflection. I had steeled myself to expect anything. My own face looked at me, an intense frown of concentration on it, the eyelids drawn down to mere slits.

I sighed with relief. At least I still had that one thing to cling to. I rubbed my cheek with visibly trembling fingers and mentally damned my aching right shoulder.

The water in the kettle was singing. It reminded me of what I had come in here to do. I spent five minutes searching for the coffee and found it in a white can of a set containing everything from tea to flour. I guessed at the amount to put in the dripolator, poured the boiling water in the top half, then went to the bathroom and found an electric razor in the medicine cabinet.

Afterwards I braved the bedroom again and put on the clothes draped neatly over a chair. They weren't my clothes, but they fit.

The woman chatted cheerfully.

"I have so much to do today," she said. "The Bridge Club meets here today. I can never stand that Mrs. Chadwick, but I have to put up with her or give up Bridge. The laundry will come back today, too. I wonder if Ralphs will have that brand of caviar Edith said is so good?"

I DIDN'T make any response, and she didn't seem to expect me to. I was just someone to talk in the presence of. I was dressed, I touched the wallet in the hip-pocket of my trousers, and wondered whose identifications I would find in it.

I escaped to the kitchen again to find out, but the woman came after me, putting on her bathrobe, continuing her line of chatter.

"Why don't you get the paper out of the hall, Dave?" she said suddenly.

I groaned at the thought.

"Your rheumatism bad again?" she said sympathetically. "I'll get it."

She flipped the frying eggs over and went into the living room. I heard a door open and close. She was back again with the paper.

She handed it to me. I held it, wondering what would happen if I opened it and tried to read it.

I could smell the coffee. I could smell the eggs and bacon, and hear them cooking. I held my breath and looked at a segment of the newspaper. The type was clear. I read, "upstate New York for this year." It was clear and leg-

ible, and I had had no difficulty reading it. And nothing had happened to me.

The woman set a plate of bacon and eggs in front of me. The plate was large, with an intricate blue design on it. A moment later she brought a cup of coffee.

"Better hurry," she said cheerfully. "I wish you would make an appointment this morning and go see that radio-therapist and let him put heat on your shoulder. It did you a world of good the last time."

I grunted and ate swiftly, wanting to escape. She didn't resent my lack of response. She seemed to take it for granted. She sat there, sipping a cup of coffee. She hadn't fixed herself anything to eat.

I finished eating and pushed my chair back.

"Take the paper with you and read it on the bus," she said. I picked it up rather than risk an argument. "And be sure and see the radio-therapist," she added as a parting shot when I reached the hall door.

In the hall, with the door safely closed, I started to take out the wallet. I hesitated. She was the type of woman who might come to the door with more instructions. So I went down the stairs to the ground floor, and out to the sidewalk.

I had never seen this neighborhood before. I walked along the sidewalk and casually took out my wallet. Unfolding it, I saw an identification card. It was a familiar one. It was the one for Rexlo Re-

search Corporation. It classified me as a scientist.

My name was David Thordsen!

IT made sense. I wasn't going to bother about what kind of sense yet. But I felt a great weight lift. For one thing, I didn't have to wonder about where I was going to go for the day. For another, I was suddenly and irrationally sure that I wasn't insane.

Why?

Probably it was more like having a box of pieces from what seems to be a jigsaw puzzle. None of the pieces fit together. You begin to wonder if it is a puzzle, or just nonsense pieces. Then you find two that fit together. The edge of one fits into the edge of the other.

I was Fred Martin. That certainty persisted. Right now it was my only certainty. But I had been Orville Snyder who worked in the lab at Rexlo Research, although I had never heard of him before. That was one of the pieces. It fitted, somehow, against the obvious fact that I was now David Thordsen who worked there.

And yet I wasn't David Thordsen. The woman who must be his wife was a stranger to me, just as the woman who must be Orville Snyder's wife was a stranger.

There was one additional thing. When I had seemed to be Orville, I had looked in the mirror, and my features had been my own. As David Thordsen I had looked in the mirror, and my features were my

own. Still the same face, the same eyes looking at me.

While I had been mulling these things over in my thoughts I had been riding on the bus. The Rexlo buildings were in the next block. I rose and went to the doors, eager to get to the lab. A thousand things could be checked and cross-checked there. The things on Orville's bench, Orville himself when and if he showed up.

"Hello, Thordsen!" I looked at the man who greeted me so cheerfully, and nodded. But I had never seen him before. "Nice mornin'," he said, falling into step beside me as we entered the main building.

The elevator was running now. We stepped in. The elevator operator smiled and said, "Good morning, Dr. Thordsen, Dr. Mintner."

Mintner! This stranger beside me was Mintner. I had worked with Mintner for a long time—and yet I had never seen him before. This man was a stranger.

We stepped out of the elevator together. We went down the hall to the lab door. It was open. I went in first.

My gaze went to my bench—or Orville's bench, rather. A man was there, his back to me, his shoulders and elbows moving in the process of fitting parts together.

"Morning, Orville," Mintner said behind me.

The man at the bench turned his head. He smiled and said, "Hi, Hank. Hi, Dave."

I stared at his face. I tried to

find something familiar in it. There was nothing. I had never seen him before. I was positive of that.

And it was a strange feeling. I went across the lab and glanced over his bench. The tube bank was there, the condensors and resistors, almost in the same positions I had left them last night:

"Uh, Dave," Orville Snyder said.

"Yes?" I said, still looking at the things on the bench.

"Uh, I'm a little short again. Could you spare another twenty?"

I LOOKED at him, startled. The woman who was his wife—she had drunk up the grocery money. My eyes flicked down toward his hip pocket. I was certain that in his wallet was a slip of paper with my—Thordsen's—name on it, and a figure after it. Fifty dollars, to be exact.

I took out my wallet and looked in it. I had two twenties and three fives and some ones. I extracted a twenty.

"Thanks, Dave," he said gratefully. He took out his wallet and put the twenty in it. I caught a glimpse of two of the identification cards. They were the ones I had examined so carefully last night.

"Aren't you going to mark it down?" I asked, smiling.

He looked at me queerly. "Mark it down?" he echoed. "I can remember. This makes seventy."

"Okay," I said. I went over to my desk. A few minutes later I watched from the corner of my eye

as he extracted the folded slip and jotted swift marks on it. A notation of the new amount he owed me. And I wasn't the only one he owed money to—because of his wife.

Henry Mintner came back into the lab. I hadn't seen him leave, nor missed him. He was carrying several small cartons of electronic parts. Orville Snyder was back at work again.

Did I have some work—as Dave Thordsen—that I was supposed to get busy at? If so, I didn't know what it was. Anyway, I had more engrossing things to occupy me. My thoughts.

It was now obvious to me that Hank and Orville did work here. So did I, or rather, Dave Thordsen. There were just the three of us. No one else worked in the lab.

Yet I was first, last and always Fred Martin, who lived in a bachelor apartment. And I had been working in this lab for three years. The bench Orville was working at was my bench. The work he was doing was my work.

"Dave!" I snapped out of my thoughts at the sound of Mintner's voice. "This stuff's no good," he called to me. "It's as bad as the other dialectric we used. It holds the proper saturation charge without breakdown, but on discharge it holds too high a residual charge." He came over to my desk and sat down on one corner of it. "Damn it," he said. "It seems there's no in-between. We either get a dialectric that discharges instead of hold-

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ing, or we get one that holds, and never lets go completely... We get a computer that doesn't work, or one that jams with random stuff after it's been in use."

"Keep trying," I said vaguely.

"I will," he said. He grinned. "That's what I get paid for."

I looked up at him speculatively. I had the impulse to try something. I snapped my fingers suddenly and sat up, as though just remembering something. "Fred Martin!" I said.

"Who's he?" Mintner asked, and I could tell he had never heard the name before.

"Skip it," I said. "I was just thinking of something I had forgotten."

"Oh," he said, turning away and going back to his work.

My right shoulder was aching again. It reminded me I was supposed to call a radio-therapist. I took the classified directory out from under a pile of papers and started to thumb through it. It gave me an idea. I took the other directory and looked for the name of Fred Martin. I found it, and jotted down the address and phone number.

Leaving the lab, I took the elevator down and went out to the sidewalk. A taxi was there. I gave the driver the address and settled back. Ten minutes later he pulled to the curb in front of the apartment house. I recognized it. I recognized the driveway at the side that led back to my garage stall,

where I parked my car.

"Wait here," I said.

I went up the familiar stairs and stopped in front of the familiar door. I fumbled in my pockets, but I didn't have any keys. I stood there for a moment, considering plans of action.

FINALLY I went back to the taxi and back to the lab. There I hunted up a radio-therapist and made an appointment for one o'clock. At four-thirty I was back in the lab again, my shoulder feeling warm and comfortable. At five, Orville and Hank left.

I looked up Dave Thordsen's number and dialed it. I recognized the voice of the woman who answered. "Dave," I growled. "I'll be late. Something that has to be done."

"Did you go to the radio-therapist?" she asked.

"Yes," I grunted. "I'll be home maybe nine. Not later than ten."

I had a hasty dinner at the cafe across the street, then caught another taxi to my apartment house.

Dismissing the taxi, I walked down the driveway to the line of garage stalls. In the back of mine, I knew, was a packing case I could sit in and wait, and no one could see me.

I was restless and uncomfortable. My shoulder ached a little again. I finally relaxed, and began to feel drowsy. I fought against sleep. A car entering the stall would awaken me, but that wasn't what I was,

afraid of. I was afraid that if I went to sleep I would awaken as someone else, somewhere else.

I had about decided to go out front and walk up and down to keep awake, when I heard a car coming. It turned into my stall. I jerked my head back and kept out of sight until I heard the car door open and close.

Then I risked a look. A man was locking the car door, and that man was Orville Snyder. My only surprise was that I wasn't surprised. Some part of my mind had expected that.

The more I thought of it the more obvious it became. Orville Snyder was also Fred Martin. He was living a double life!

I watched him leave the garage. Should I follow him to his apartment—my apartment? Of course, I knew I was going to. I had to. I gave him five minutes, then followed slowly, until I reached the door of the apartment and stopped.

I could hear him moving around inside, humming cheerfully. I felt a regret at having to disturb him in his secret existence, but I had to. I was Fred Martin. He was Fred Martin. He was also Orville Snyder, and I wasn't. And right now I was Dave Thordsen, too, and he would know me as Dave Thordsen.

I lifted my fist, feeling a stab of rheumatism in my shoulder, and knocked at the door.

There was an instant of silence as he stopped humming. Then there were footsteps. A lock grated. The

doorknob twisted. He opened the door and looked at me, his eyes going very wide suddenly.

"Dave!" he said.

"Hello, Fred Martin," I said calmly.

He blanched. "Come in," he said hurriedly in a hushed voice.

I entered the familiar living room with its shelves lined with my books. Then I turned to face the man who was both Fred Martin and Orville Snyder.

"How did you find out?" he asked, his back against the door.

"Never mind that," I said. "Tell me your story. That's what I want to hear."

He did. All of it. It was a common enough one. He had been born Fred Martin. He had gone to college. One of his companions in college had been Orville Snyder. They had graduated together. Afterwards they had gone their separate ways, keeping in touch with each other by correspondence.

Then Orville Snyder had died in an automobile accident. He had no known relatives, and had made Fred the beneficiary of his life insurance. That was how Fred had known.

Two years later Fred had taken a risk. He saw a chance to make some money in a quick stock transaction. He "borrowed" some money from the company he was with. The transaction proved to be a swindle game worked on him. He was faced with exposure and jail.

He remembered Orville Snyder. In all probability no one knew he

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was dead. Records of that were in closed files in the insurance company, in the files of an undertaker and the city hall of a far-away city.

He could take Orville's identity and employment record, and continue his career as a research engineer somewhere else in the country. He did. He worked several places, finally coming to work for Rexlo Research. Almost at once he met and fell in love with an attractive girl. They were quickly married. It was a year before he knew her real character.

He could divorce her. He put it off. Shortly after that he rented this apartment under his real name, feeling sure that after five years it would be safe to do so.

He didn't know what he would do now. He had planned on simply dropping out of sight in the near future. That's what he said.

But I could see in his eyes that he had another, more sinister plan. Murder. Only, he had been putting it off as he had always put everything off.

"What are you going to do?" he asked as I stood up and went to the door.

I looked at him, then around at my apartment, but mine no longer. The supreme conviction that I was Fred Martin had left me.

"I don't know," I said. "Probably nothing. Come to work tomorrow and say nothing. If I ever want to talk about it I'll tell you. Until then, forget that I know."

I opened the door and went out

into the hall, and closed it behind me. I looked at the familiar walls of the hallway, at the somewhat worn carpeting. And in some intangible way it was no longer familiar.

I was bewildered. I had nothing more to cling to. I was neither Fred Martin nor Orville Snyder—nor Dave Thordsen. I wasn't anyone, and yet I had to be someone. It was impossible to *be*, and not be someone!

MADE my way down the carpeted stairs to the street, trying to think. Instead, I felt only despair. I had thought I was Fred Martin. Through the ears of Dave Thordsen I had listened to Fred Martin, and as I listened I had realized I couldn't be. Some of his memories were my memories, but what I possessed was nothing more than fragments. Spotty fragments.

It was the same with his other identity, Orville Snyder. Spotty fragments that I clutched and possessed, while all else was strange to me—even such a thing as the name of his wife, a recognition of her features.

It was the same now, with Dave Thordsen. His face was my face when I looked at it in the mirror—just as Fred's face had been mine when I looked at it with his eyes in the mirror.

A new realization materialized within me as I stood on the sidewalk, trying to decide which way to go to find a bus line. *I had no*

single memory of my own. Not one.

Every memory I possessed belonged to Dave, or Orville, or his other identity, Fred Martin. And those memories were fragments. Three incomplete jigsaw puzzles mixed together in a box; and now put together sufficiently to see that they were incomplete. Sufficiently complete to see they were not one puzzle.

Yet, in a way, they were. I possessed a continuity of thought beginning when I was standing in the living room with Orville's wife talking to me, and continuing right up to now. Except for two large gaps. The first gap in memory was from the time Orville left his house until he stood in the lab. The second gap was from the time he tried to read the paper—or I tried to read the paper, until I woke up three or four hours later as Dave.

That, then, was my own memory, my remembrance of this continuity of existence starting the day before. Twenty-four hours. If I defined memory as existence, then I was twenty-four hours old. But that was utterly absurd. I could think. I could think for myself. I was reasoning right now, trying to solve the riddle of my existence, and I was doing so without Dave Thordsen being aware of it.

That was obvious, once I thought of it. Dave would have recognized his own wife. So would Orville. If they looked at their wives and couldn't recall ever seeing them before, they wouldn't have the same

reaction I had had.

I studied that angle. Right now, as I walked slowly along the sidewalk toward the street where I had seen a bus cross, I was not *all* of Dave Thordsen. I was seeing through his eyes, hearing what he was hearing. But he was also seeing through his eyes and hearing with his ears, and he was completely unaware of me. More, he was unreachable. What was he thinking of Fred Martin? I didn't know.

My contact was not with Dave Thordsen, but with his sensory and his motor centers. It had been the same with Fred Martin, with a filtering through of some of his memories—probably because of his emotional disturbances. And in both cases the contact was so smooth and intimate that instead of feeling separate, I had possessed that contact as my own.

Now, if I could free myself of it, what would happen? I shied away from the thoughts as I would shy away from death. I couldn't imagine anything separate from it.

But what else was there for me? A chameleon-like mental life as a wandering ego? What would happen if I could sever my contact with Dave's sensory centers and motor centers? Perhaps then I would become who I was in reality, and end this strange pattern of existence.

Suddenly I knew I must.

All sensation ended abruptly. There was no light, no sound. There was no thought, except for the

awareness of existence, and the sense of passing time.

Then, like the turning on of a light, I was staring through a windshield. My hands were gripping a steering wheel. I was in my car. And I was Fred Martin!

Ahead of me a man was starting to cross the street. I could not see him clearly. But there was something significant about him—something of tremendous significance.

My foot was pressed down on the gas. My car was going faster and faster. My hands turned the steering wheel a trifle, heading the car toward the man. And then I knew who he was—Dave Thordsen!

MY blood was ice in my veins. I saw him half turn and see me. He started to run. I turned the wheel so he couldn't escape. He looked over his shoulder at the car, then through the windshield at me, and he recognized me. I could see it in his expression as the left fender struck him and tossed his shattered body aside.

At the next corner I turned right. Two blocks later I turned right again. A third time, and ahead of me in the next block a crowd had collected around something at the curb. A man's body.

I turned into the driveway and slid the car into my garage stall.

The left headlight was broken. I thanked my lucky stars for being the cautious type. I always carried a spare. I got it, and tools, from

the trunk of the car. Ten minutes later the job was done.

Now I had one more job to do. I'd put it off long enough. I realized that now. Thordsen's discovery of my secret identity had precipitated things. He was dead now, but while I was in the mood I might as well get it all done.

It was wrong. I knew it was wrong. But I was Fred Martin and it was something to cling to, to hold to forever. It was better to be Fred Martin than to be nothing.

In the glove compartment was a gun, a small size thirty-eight automatic. It belonged to Orville Snyder. I took it out and put it in my pocket. Then I backed my car out of the garage and turned it into the driveway. As I edged across the sidewalk I looked up the street. Police cars were there with their ogling red eyes. And an ambulance. Fear clutched at me. Maybe Thordsen wasn't dead.

I fought down the fear. If Thordsen lived, I was done. That possibility made it all the more imperative that I kill—

I didn't know her name. Even now I couldn't get her name. Some psychological block kept it from me.

I sat back, mentally, and looked at the situation. The realization slowly simmered through that it wasn't *I* who had killed Thordsen. It wasn't *I* who was driving so intently, with my fingers gripping the steering wheel so tensely. I had thought so because *I* seemed to possess thoughts, tie myself to them

and believe them mine.

I tried to feel regret for Dave Thordsen. I couldn't, because Fred Martin didn't. I tried to feel horror at what was coming. I couldn't. All I could feel was an overwhelming desire to point the gun at that woman and fire, and see her crumble to the floor.

I didn't recognize the house. I remembered the concrete porch painted with red enamel. I parked the car at the curb and walked to the porch with swift nervous steps. But I was taking care to keep my footsteps silent.

At the front door I took my keys from my pocket and slipped the right one carefully into the lock. With infinite caution I turned it until I heard the ever so faint click of the lock opening. Then I opened the door, inch by inch.

I recognized the living room where my first memory of events had begun. It was deserted. In another part of the house a radio was going, playing soft music. A woman's voice, singing, came to my ears. It wasn't on the radio. It was off key and untrained.

I took out the gun and made sure the safety catch was off. I pulled the loading mechanism back far enough to make sure a bullet was in the chamber. With the gun in my hand, I crossed to a door. I hesitated briefly, then twisted the knob and gave the door a light push that made it swing open wide.

THE singing stopped. I saw her across the room, sitting before

a large mirror. And she saw me in the mirror. She saw the gun, too.

"No, Orville!" she said. Her hand went up to her mouth, but she didn't turn.

I lifted the gun and aimed carefully. Even as I pulled the trigger I tried desperately not to, and at the same time I sensed that the only reason I could try not to was because a part of Fred Martin was also trying to stop this killing.

I wasn't able to have a thought of my own. I was a chameleon, a freak aggregation of fragmentary thoughts from other people's minds, brought together in a temporal continuity held together by the concept, *I*.

Or was I?

Right now I was in the living room again. I had found pen and paper in a desk, and was writing. What I was writing was a confession for the murder of my wife. I read her name where I had written it. Thelma. It was weird to not have known her name until I read it after writing it.

But what else was this I was writing? I was going to kill myself? But I wasn't. I had built up my other identity too carefully. The note was a cover-up.

It was finished. I left it on the desk and hurried out of the house. The skinny man next door was standing on his lawn looking at the door as I came out.

"What was that in there, Orville?" he asked. "I thought I heard a shot."

"Shot?" I said. "Oh, I remember. Thelma was turning to another station and had the volume too loud."

I went to my car and slipped in behind the wheel. He was still studying the house uneasily. In a few more minutes he would knock to make sure she was all right. Then he would call the police.

But by that time Orville Snyder would be no more.

I knew the plan now. The river had less than fifty miles to go to the ocean. More than one person had committed suicide by leaping from a bridge, without their body ever being found. Once one of the bodies had washed ashore five hundred miles down the coast.

I was going to stop on a bridge and leave my coat, with the gun in it, and with my wallet in it, to serve as proof that I had jumped.

But it wasn't I. It was Fred Martin. I was fighting to destroy the illusion of his surface thoughts being mine, of my being Fred Martin.

It was no use. The most I could accomplish was a conscious realization of the fact.

Abruptly I tried another line. If I couldn't divorce myself from him could I actually control him for a brief moment? I had done so before, when he wasn't under emotional tension.

I looked at the concrete street-light standards on the curb. I was travelling fast. Forty-five. If I could twist the wheel and crash in-

to a light standard . . .

I fought for control of my arms. Beads of perspiration formed on my face. I didn't want to kill myself. Why did I think of such an absurd thing?

But it wasn't I who didn't want to kill myself. It was Fred.

With that realization I jerked the steering wheel, feeling myself lurch against the door as the car headed for the curb.

I was two people, and aware of the thoughts of both. I was Fred, and he had done a curious thing in this last second of his life. He had rejected the knowledge of impending death. To him the light standard was Thordsen, and he was once again going to kill him.

And I was myself, aware suddenly that perhaps this was death for me too, for with Fred's death there was nothing to transfer to.

I couldn't face it. I changed my mind and jerked frantically at the wheel to avert the crash. And at the same time I felt myself lifted. I saw the sidewalk and buildings spin. I had time to realize the car had hit the curb and was turning over . . .

I FROWNED at the doodles I had drawn on the notepad. One was a triangle. Another was a crude circle, resting on the bottom of the triangle.

"Dr. Mintner," a voice said behind me.

I turned my head, startled. A man I had never seen before was

standing there, a plastic lab apron covering his shirt front.

"What is it?" I said.

My thoughts were whirling. I was Mintner. I had always been Mintner.

"I think I know what to do about that problem of the dialectric," he said.

I smiled. The inexperienced fool. I had worked on that problem for two years. It wasn't going to be solved easily. "Yes?" I said.

"I studied it from a different angle than the one you did," he said. "That was what you suggested when I started here two months ago. Try new lines of approach."

"That's right," I said. I smiled encouragingly.

"The dialectric isn't suited for computers," he said. "You tried to find one that was. I tried that too, and covered your ground. Then I asked myself, if it isn't suited to computers, what is it good for? It's no good for computers because it doesn't discharge completely. Or rather, it does and it doesn't. Its structure is altered by the saturation charge and subsequent discharge in the computation processes. But random and not-so-random charges build up again for some reason, and interfere with computations after the machine has been used a few times. I puzzled over this. It was too much like true memory. I think what we have in this computer setup is more like a non-living thinking brain than a simple computer. If we change the

bleeder leaks to the control grids—or maybe even cut them out altogether so that the basic charge doesn't dissipate, and feed in something other than figures and equations we can find out. Another thing, we'll have to shield the charge circuits. I've been looking at those completed computers in the back room. The charge circuits have unshielded sections that can act like untuned radar antennae — a little too short in wavelength for radar, but there's all kinds of unknown infra-reds bouncing around."

What he was saying had penetrated with an impact that left me paralyzed and cold. A million things clicked together in one final synthesis of the problem of my identity.

"I think you might have something there," I heard myself say. "Uh, don't touch any of those computers in the storeroom. Try some unused dialectric mix and start from scratch. Get to work on it right away."

I waited until he had gone back to his bench—the one I had considered mine when I was so sure I was Fred Martin. I was trembling in every muscle as I stood up, even though I knew that outwardly I appeared to be a bored and indifferent lab boss.

I crossed over to the door to the storeroom where the abandoned computers were stored. When I reached it I paused and looked around the lab. My two new assistants were busy at their benches. They weren't looking my way.

IMAGINATION

I went in and closed the door, placing my back to it. In front of me was an aisle. Walling the aisle were two tiers of open box storage spaces. Some of them were empty. In several dozen were computers, all constructed in this lab, all identical, and all unusable because they held random charges that produced errors in mathematical calculations.

It was like a tomb here in the storeroom. Quiet. The computers rested in their niches like bodies in a morgue. And one of them was me.

Here, somewhere, was my body. It was a neat body with its brown crackle finish and orderly keyboard. But it was like all the others and there was no way of telling which one was me.

I took step after slow step, pausing at each one, trying to probe with mental fingers and find some indication of which I was. I paused at each, and when I was through I still didn't know.

THERE was a way of finding out: My new assistant had mentioned it. I could take each of these computers and shield the wires that served as antennae, transmitting my thoughts and receiving those of Mintner.

But how could I be sure that he would unshield my antenna wires once he had covered them and severed my contact with him? It was a risk I was going to have to take. I started to tremble again. Somewhere in this storeroom, in one of

these sepulchral niches, was *it*. I had to know which one.

I went back to the lab and returned with a kit of small tools. My fingers were calm and sure now. My trembling was gone. I took the front panel off the first computer near the door. The short wires from the dielectric mix to the tube bank were in plain view, easily accessible.

I stood there studying them, considering and discarding a dozen plans for shielding them so they could be quickly unshielded again.

Finally, I decided on a procedure that was as foolproof as any I could possibly devise. Rubber pads with aluminum plates to be put over the rubber.

After that it was merely a matter of carrying out the routine. I built the rubber shields and the aluminum ones. I fitted them carefully over the wires on the first machine, then as carefully took them off. Nothing had happened.

I did the same to the second machine.

I was on the fifth machine when the storeroom door opened and my two assistants announced they were leaving for the day. I glanced at my watch. It was five-thirty.

"Okay," I answered. "See you in the morning."

They closed the door. I started taking off the panel of the sixth computer.

It was getting a little stuffy in the storeroom. I set the panel down carefully and opened the lab door

and a window. Then I placed the rubber shield on the wires.

I picked up the aluminum shield plates and started to cover the rubber shielding with them. Instead, I laid them down again. I would go across the street to the cafe and have something to eat before going ahead.

I entered the lab. It was dark. A storm must be coming up for it to get dark so soon and so suddenly.

I switched on the lights and unconsciously glanced at my watch to make sure of the time, and froze in surprise. It was nine-thirty.

I reviewed my movements. My assistants had said goodnight about five minutes ago. I had glanced at my watch then, and it was five-thirty. Now it was nine-thirty. After they had gone I had placed the rubber covers over the wires, then started to put the aluminum shields on—and changed my mind.

Only I hadn't! I had placed the aluminum shields on number six computer and severed my contact with Mintner. He had probably gone out to eat then, and not returned until a few minutes ago. The instant he removed the shields I was in contact again, with no sense of the intervening time. Maybe a faint sense of discontinuity that I paid no attention to. Mintner's hands were in about the same position, holding the shields. I thought he had paused in putting them on, when in reality he had just taken them off.

That was the explanation.

I TURNED toward the storeroom door with a mixture of emotions. Suddenly I ran to the door and flung it open. I went down the aisle and looked at the computer, at the dielectric mix in the case deep in its heart.

It was I. In that small space, that nonliving mass, was the spark that was I. For a long moment I caressed its every atom with my eyes. Then, carefully, I put back the cover.

It was a strange, almost a Holy moment. I recalled my first moment of awareness. It seemed now an eternity ago that I had seen Orville's wife standing there.

From that moment to this I had groped, sometimes utterly confused, sometimes with purposeful strides, toward the answer to the riddle of my existence.

I touched my protective case tenderly with Mintner's fingers. Finding myself filled me with two conflicting emotions. Delight in at last knowing, with all the confusion behind me. Dread, that something might happen to destroy me.

I didn't worry about Mintner. By now I knew enough about the working relationship between me and man to realize his own ego was rationalizing like mad to keep the sense of being master of his movements.

My physical structure had to be protected, preserved. And there was a way to do it. Destroy the other computers and keep this one as a museum piece. Put it in a hermet-

ically sealed glass exhibition case down in the main office.

I could feel the Mintner ego seizing on this idea as its own. I was strong now. No longer was I a chameleon wisp of vague and bewildered thought. I was master of my fate.

From this moment on I knew what I was going to do. I had no idea whether my existence would be long or short. I might continue to exist for centuries. On the other

hand, vibrations—I made a mental note to be sure the display case was vibration proof—might shake something vital loose in months.

But that didn't concern me too much. In this moment of the discovery of my physical home, in the birth of my discovery of *self*, a realization of my destiny, my purpose, was also born.

I, through the hands of Mintner and his two assistants, was going to build the first robot!

THE END

The Listening Post

—FANTASCIENCE MUSIC FOR SCIENCE FICTION—

by Harry D. Josephson

GIVE me the April reel of *Imagination*, please."

"Right. Is that for a DuPont projector?"

"Yes, of course. Say, while I think of it—have you anything new in sonic backgrounds?"

"I can recommend a number of good sound tracks, sir. There's a new Josephson 'Within the Pits of Luna'—it's a tone poem designed to match exactly Leiner's lead story 'The Moon and I.' Would you care to try it?"

"I think I will. Put in a few short pieces too. I like background music with my ess-eff."

Science fiction doesn't yet come with built-in musical accompaniment to complement the undreamed dreams of the future, but that's no reason at all why science fiction fans today can't take advan-

tage of a practice common to many readers, that of reading while taking their mood-pleasure in a suitable musical background.

This relatively unknown practice is more common than you might think and it is solidly founded in both logic and psychology. How often have you seen people reading, and even studying, while the radio played on untouched?

No one can dictate taste in music, but for a science fictionist's particular pleasure, modern music above all should be the selected accompaniment. There are good reasons for this. Both science fiction and modern music are expressions of the same psychological force, the imagination.

S-f probes the unknown but suggested regions beyond established

science, but using essentially common concepts and familiar language. Modern music is a new auditory experience, still retaining the fundamentals of familiar music.

Because of this identity of intention and method, s-f can be all the more enjoyed, if modern music is heard while reading.

Modern music acts as a suggestive guide, setting the imagination free, building whole worlds of nothing. A superb demonstration of this can be gotten from seeing one of the amateur s-f films, which use modern music for their sound track. Invariably, despite the primitiveness of the actual film work, the sets, models, etc., the overwhelming impression is almost always favorable, no little part of which is due to the subtle power of the music.

Unfortunately modern music hasn't received wide-spread acceptance, though there is a growing awareness of its quality. Similarly s-f is making itself more widely felt in the literature of the time, and is showing that it is *literature*. Oddly enough, most s-f fans are unaware that there is the same integrity and legitimacy in the strange lands of modern music. It is highly fitting then that these two phases of appreciation should be joined.

It is also significant that the history of contemporary music coincides with the history of modern science. Actually they are children of the same parents. These two activities were born at the same time when all of Man's higher capabilities were unfettered, during that proud period we call the Renaissance—Rebirth!

MUSIC and science both required the development of instrumentation and technique to bring them to their present form. Newton's gravitational theory awaited astro-

nomical observation. Music required instrumentation, the perfection of the violin, the piano, etc.

Bach and Beethoven opened up a whole new world of musical experience and for a hundred years the exploration of this world was the objective of musical adventurers. Now this land is well charted and is the familiar estate of common musical enjoyment.

Verne and Wells similarly opened up an entirely new vista in literature, but one which is far from completely explored even now. Their concepts within their time were daring, but modern s-f writers have gone far beyond them and nothing is too esoteric for the talents of the writers.

Modern music and modern s-f share this passion for exploration and discovery. Arnold Schoenberg startles the musical world with a new concept of the twelve-tone row. E. E. Smith writes epic galactic adventures beyond all time and space.

Habas introduces intervals of one-eighth and one-quarter tones and a microcosm of modern music results. Heinlein writes a mythical history of the next thousand years with compelling intensity and incredibly sound extrapolation.

And so in both fields progress is incredibly swift. Why not take advantage of the common qualities and use them to complement—and "compliment"—each other? The stimulation your imagination receives from these two forms of sense-impression may surprise you. The impression is surprisingly like the effective use of background music in a good film. Contrast, mood and suspense are all assisted by the subtleties of the music. Obviously there is no limitation on the variations you may employ. The fields of modern music and modern s-f are limitless.



Trapped in time, Ken couldn't stop mankind from destroying itself in a final war — unless, ironically, his plight gave civilization its—

SECOND WIND

By

Daniel F. Galouye

“**T**HREE’S Kraknof now!” Ken Gregory tightened his grip on the girl’s arm and nodded toward the hotel desk. “Get a good mental picture of him so you can report on his description.”

He felt the girl stiffen beside him as she eyed the man intensively, unobtrusively.

“Type L-Four; Twenty-two-C; K - Thirteen; Double - O,” Carol whispered absently as her eyes skipped from one feature of the

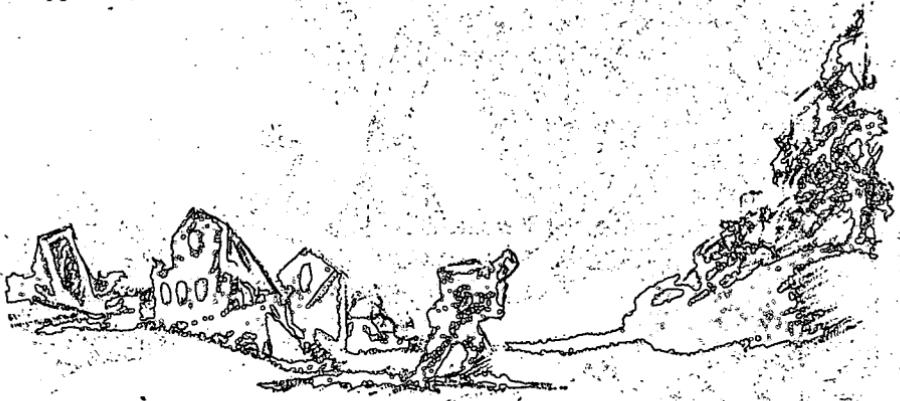
man’s appearance to the next.

“I’d make that last classification Double-O-One,” Ken suggested. “Otherwise, you’ve got him typed perfectly.”

The tall, muscular man spoke briefly with the desk clerk, accepted three pieces of mail and walked into an elevator.

Ken relaxed, letting his back sink into the soft upholstery of the lobby sofa.

Carol sighed apprehensively. “I’m afraid, Ken.”



"It won't be long now, honey," he encouraged, patting the back of her hand. "If my theory's correct, he'll be upstairs about five minutes. Then he'll rush out to... ." he drew a pad from his pocket and made rapid scratches on it with a pencil, "... this address."

He tore off the page and handed it to the girl.

"But suppose . . ." she began, her blue eyes reflecting mounting uneasiness.

"Suppose nothing." He smiled. "He'll go right out to the warehouse. Whoever stole the Master Plan will meet him there. I'll kill both of them." There was no emotion in his voice.

"It'll be too dangerous to maintain radio contact," he continued after a moment. "So when I take out after him, you get back to headquarters and report."

Her head jerked suddenly in the direction of the wall clock. Long blonde hair swished silently across her shoulder. "I'm due back in a few minutes anyway," she reminded.

He frowned. "Double emergency recovery procedure?"

"Yes. It's already been twenty-four hours since the theft. That's all the time they've allowed for recovery through normal procedure. So half the agents in the area are going to be — conditioned."

He felt a slight, involuntary vibration in the flesh of her arm. Only vaguely did he know what agent-conditioning meant. Only

through rumor. On two occasions that he remembered, agents had been conditioned psychologically and physiologically into super-agents. Reacting to overpowering compulsion, they carried out their assignments like precision machines. But they were no longer suited to counter-espionage work. They were tactfully retired and completely and immediately removed from contact with other agents.

"Maybe it's for the best, Carol," he said grimly. "Maybe I'm glad you're going to be conditioned. That'll be the end of this business for you."

"But what'll I do?"

"You'll marry me like we planned."

"No, Ken." She shook her head. "That won't be any good. If you are on the job, I want to be on it too. If I get out, I'll marry you — if you get out too."

He bit his lips. The endless argument again, he thought.

"Maybe they'll get away with the Master Defense Attack Plan," he said scornfully. "Maybe we'll be forced to initiate war in another twenty-four hours — before the Plan can be appraised and before they can amend their Master Plan to counter ours . . . If they attack, then everything'll be out in the open. Our jobs will be through."

"Oh, Ken, that's a horrible thought. War won't end our troubles without ending everything else, even civilization along with it. I . . ."

He stiffened, turned toward her and took both of her small hands in his, smiling enthusiastically into her face. But the smile was only a disguise.

"Kraknof!" he whispered, his eyes making a small darting motion toward the elevator.

Wiping perspiration from his face, the enemy agent walked rapidly toward the lobby exit. As he reached for the brass door plate, Ken strode after him, letting his hand brush across his hip to touch the reassuring bulk of the gun. Carol headed for another door.

KRAKNOF maintained a steady pace on the crowded sidewalk. The mid-afternoon throng provided the cover Ken needed.

The nearest pedestrian transmit station was at the end of the next block. As Kraknof neared the twin rows of sending and receiving booths, he quickened his pace. But Ken brushed aside a man with an armful of bundles and managed to observe the booth the agent entered.

Kraknof's form wavered, disappeared, leaving the enclosure bare as Ken ran the rest of the way to the booth before anyone could select it for use and change its destination dial setting.

Commanding its entrance, he glanced at the dial. A slight tinge of confusion spread over him. He had been sure Kraknof would go immediately to the suspect warehouse on the northern edge of town. Instead, the dial showed, he had

transmitted himself to a station only a few blocks away. Was he employing a back-tracking procedure to make certain he wasn't being followed? Would he materialize suddenly in one of the receiving booths in the other row?

Brushing aside indecision, he stepped into the booth, impatiently tolerating the slight tingling he felt as his body experienced the forces of conversion, and was whisked away at light-speed.

Cautiously, he stepped out of the receiving booth.

The sidewalk was not so crowded in this fringe section of the business district. Ken sighed relief as he saw Kraknof's broad back only a half block away. The agent turned abruptly and entered a drug store.

Ken slowed his pace to a leisurely stroll and forced himself to relax. Relaxing before an assignment reached its climax was a trick he had learned from an older agent—an effective device that allowed him to enjoy a subsequent sharper command of his faculties.

Calmly, he felt the bulk of his gun again. He had never killed anyone with it. But the novel horror of initial slayings was a sensation that was not among his present emotions. Whether it would be hard to kill two men, or possibly more, was a consideration far overshadowed by the gravity of his assignment.

Unless the Master Plan, spirited away only a day ago in the most ingenious bit of espionage work on

record, were returned, there would be war. Unless it were recovered within another twenty-four hours, and unless all enemy agents who had gained access to its secrets were killed, there would be war—a necessary war of defense that would begin with immediate attack.

There was an inconsistency in the reasoning that arrived at a devastating attack as a means of defense, he realized. But moral aspects did not concern him.

He walked casually past the plate-glass window of the drug store and glanced in. Kraknof was in a telephone booth. The booth's glass door relieved Ken's suspicion that perhaps here, instead of at the deserted warehouse, would be the scene of the pass-off.

During the next hour, he perspired under the physical effects of mounting suspicion as he waited for the agent to resume his trip to the warehouse. Suppose he had been wrong? Suppose Kraknof was not the man to receive the portfolio? Suppose he was merely directing its transfer and, even now the information in the Plan was being transmitted to the enemy?

Surrendering to the suspicion, he drew his compact radio transceiver from his pocket to report his consternation to headquarters.

But Kraknof left the booth suddenly. Ken slipped into the foyer of another establishment and let him pass and gain a half-block lead.

The agent was strolling now. He checked his watch and slowed his

steps even more. He was apparently killing time! Ken stopped twice to look in show windows while he let the man draw farther away.

Almost an hour passed before the agent turned a corner and altered his course for the nearest pedestrian transmit station. Now he quickened his pace.

But on this new street there was only a handful of other persons. Ken could not afford to close in without increasing his chance of being detected. Fearful of the possibility that the destination dial of the transmit booth Kraknof would use might be readjusted by another person before he could follow the agent, Ken tensed himself for a dash to the booth.

Kraknof made his selection on the dial, hesitated a moment, then entered.

Ken surged forward in a lunge for the booth. There was no time to note the selected destination. He must get in quickly—before Kraknof would be out of sight of the receiving booth!

He dived into the enclosure and stepped out of the receiving booth—into the warehouse area station he had suspected would be Kraknof's eventual destination.

It was simpler than he had anticipated. The agent was crossing the street a half-block away, heading for the side entrance of the deserted, corrugated iron building.

Ken gingerly ducked behind the receiver booth, where he could observe the man's actions without being seen.

IT was a one-unit station—a single transmitter and a single receiver, which was sufficient for this out-of-the-way location. The twin booths were arranged so that the receiver hid the transmitter from the line of vision that extended from the warehouse door.

Ken allowed several minutes to pass so that he would enter the vacant structure only after Kraknof had instinctively checked to see whether he was being followed. While he waited he set the transmitter dial for a receiving booth in a station in the downtown area in the general vicinity of headquarters. The action would save time should he have to leave in a hurry.

Then he went hesitatingly down the sidewalk, crossed the street and entered the warehouse. As he went through the door, he ducked quickly to one side and dropped silently to the floor, holding his breath.

No motion or sound from within indicated his entry had been observed. His eyes gradually became accustomed to the darkness and he pushed on between rows of empty crates.

Ahead, to the left, a dim light bulb beat back some of the musky darkness of the vault-like region. A muffled cough sounded and reverberated hollowly.

He crept closer and looked over the top of a crate. Kraknof sat restlessly on a box, drumming his fingers nervously atop a larger crate that evidently had, in previous

meetings, served as a table. An ancient dry-cell activated bulb was the source of illumination.

Obviously, Kraknof had nothing to do but wait. Ken lowered himself silently to a comfortable position on the floor, withdrew his weapon, and waited too.

The vigil did not last long.

Bold footsteps sounded across the dank floor. Ken regained his feet and peered over the top of the crate. A small, thin man walked rapidly into the area of the light. Clasped tightly under his right arm was . . .

The portfolio!

It was the document that meant the difference between immediate, devastating war such as the world had never seen—or would probably never be able to see again—and continued cold war. But a cold war that at least offered the possibility of eventually shading into peace once more—perhaps even a lasting peace.

From the shadows, he centered the thin man in his gun sights; watched him walk over to the table.

As soon as he puts the briefcase down, he restrained himself. As soon as he puts it down.

His eyes darting around suspiciously, the agent extended the leather case in a trembling hand and dropped it on the table.

Steadily, Ken pulled back on the trigger.

A white beam of silent death shot out, engulfing the spy, sending into oblivion him and whatever in-

formation he might have obtained by reading the Master Plan.

Even before the beam extinguished itself as he released the trigger, Ken swung the gun around on the other spy.

But Kraknof's reflexes, despite his massive size, were lightning fast.

Ken's next shot went over his head as the agent plunged behind the ersatz table and scurried backward to the protection of other boxes.

Then Kraknof's shot from an unsuspected direction, flashed out, crashing into the edge of the box which offered only insubstantial protection for Ken.

The wooden case flared in a blinding blaze of charred, burning wood. Boards exploded outward, ramming into his body with a terrific impact that hurled him backward, knocking the weapon from his hand.

DAZED, he regained his feet after he had rolled behind another row of crates. His gun was in plain sight on the floor, illuminated by the dim light of the battery lamp.

But Kraknof could see it too! He stepped boldly out into the open, tensely clutching his own weapon. Then he walked to the table, picked up the portfolio, and turned again in Ken's direction.

Shaking his head to clear it, Ken backed away between the rows of cases, still unobserved. Kraknof continued his cautious advance,

kicking over crates, stopping occasionally to twist his head and listen.

Ken crawled desperately along the floor, his pursuer dangerously close now. Staying behind the boxes, he started working his way into the dense shadows away from the light.

His hand found something hard, solid: A length of pipe. He clutched it. Not much of a weapon against an ion gun. But at least it was considerably more efficient than his bare hands.

A crate in the row twenty feet away skidded forward suddenly, opening a breach. Ken sprang to his feet. Kraknof stepped through the space, spied his prey and raised the weapon.

Ken hurled the pipe. It struck the agent flatly across the chest. He dropped the portfolio. As the man jockeyed to keep himself from flailing backward into the cases, Ken lunged forward, managed to grasp the agent's weapon hand.

Kraknof drove his left fist into Ken's face. There was brute force behind the punch. But he held on to the other wrist, forcing the arm backward.

The agent crashed a handful of knuckles into his face once more. Shaking off the effects of the blow, Ken lurched and twisted around the side of the spy, bringing the arm around with him and securing it behind the larger man in a hammer lock.

Kraknof cried out in pain and the gun dropped. Ken delivered a rab-

bit punch and let the arm go. Kraknof staggered forward. Following closely, Ken spun him around and drove a fist into his abdomen, another into his face, and another.

Under the barrage of trained, rapid blows, the man fell back against the row of cases. He tossed a feeble fist into Ken's face and the blow was returned with a crashing right.

Kraknof's knees collapsed and he slipped to the floor, tried to rise. But Ken lashed out with another right and flattened the man on his back. Then Ken was on top of him, his fingers clamped around the man's throat.

He held the grip until there was no doubt the agent was dead.

Then, trembling in a brief reaction to the two duty killings, he rose and retrieved the portfolio. The slayings were not a matter to be mulled by his conscience. He had the briefcase. That was all that mattered. He had only to return it to headquarters before attack deadline and he would prevent an ultimate war that could conceivably knock the foundation from civilization—perhaps even obliterate humanity.

HE grasped the leather case under his arm and started for the door.

But the brilliant flash of an ion ray zipped over his head and exploded a stack of cases nearby.

He ducked the falling debris and scurried once more to cover. Peer-

ing out cautiously, he watched the approaching small figure for a moment, then reached out across the floor for Kraknof's gun.

But he turned his head suddenly to look again at the newcomer who had reached a better lighted area. It was Carol!

He relaxed.

"It's me, honey," he stepped out from behind the case. "I've got the Plan. The assignment's . . ."

But she was not listening! Her face a mask of stern immobility, she raised the weapon.

Confounded, he backed behind the case. The ray lashed out.

"It's Ken!" he shouted. "Don't you understand? It's . . ."

Another blast almost disintegrated the case next to the one which hid him.

Carol, as though dazed, came forward determinedly, increasing her pace rapidly.

Dazed! That was it, he realized. The conditioning process! She had been conditioned! What the terms of the conditioning were, he did not know. But the results were deadly—designed so in a desperate attempt to recover the Master Plan and execute anyone found in contact with it!

Discarding caution, Ken raced away between two rows of cases in a sprint for the door. The only way to cope with a hypnotically conditioned agent was to get out of his or her way and notify the deconditioning boys.

The doorway loomed ahead. An-

other ion beam lanced out and bored its way through the metal side of the building. The staccato clatter of her thin heels against the concrete floor, however, drew closer as her pursuit gathered speed.

Then he was out of the building and racing for the single transmit booth.

Another shot streaked to his right, glancing against the side of the warehouse and melting its corrugated iron. And still she gained!

He made the booth, plunged into it, as a bolt nicked the lower left hand corner of the structure. But it was not one of the selected booths in the center of the city in which he found himself after transmission!

IN wild disbelief, his eyes scanned the bizarre panorama—the gullies, abraded stones and drab soil that stood out in embarrassed nudity along irregular slopes. A gray, late afternoon sky heightened the immediately depressing effects of the landscape, totally alien except for the presence of the receiver booth on the small, sloping plateau on which he stood—a plateau that dropped off into an eight-foot chasm.

He turned and faced the open archway of the booth from which he had emerged. Beyond the square box, beyond the edge of the plateau, was a grassy plain that ended against a line of thick trees.

Abruptly Carol materialized in the booth! He had almost forgot-

ten about her.

For a portentous second he stared into her expressionless eyes. Then suppleness finally replaced his stunned rigidity and his hand shot out for her arm. But she had already sprung from the enclosure.

They collided. Rebounding, they fell to the ground. She rolled nimbly out of his reach and swung the gun around. Ken lurched to one side. The flash of the weapon sizzled into the ground.

While she took a second aim, he leaped to the edge of the plateau and dived into the chasm. The portfolio dropped down on top of him and he grasped it instinctively.

He raced down the deep ravine, branched off to the left when he reached a fork and dived behind a boulder that hid a darkened, mouth-like indentation in the earthen wall.

Listening intently, he restrained his labored breath. The sounds of grating pebbles told him she was in the gully. She had negotiated the slope and dropped into the chasm almost as rapidly as he had. He had noticed the accelerated pace of her motions even in the warehouse.

Suddenly he had the answer. He should have recognized it sooner. She was hopped up with a reaction accelerator! Her senses were sharper and her movements proportionately faster.

Abruptly he was conscious of another incongruity in her actions: On materializing she should have realized that no matter transmitter in

existence could have deposited them, together with a receiving booth, in a place like this. Yet, her new location had made no impression on her!

That made it all the more apparent she was under the effects of hypno-conditioned compulsion, and nothing would make an appreciable impression on her until she accomplished her purpose of killing him and retrieving the Plan.

6 MAINTENANCE."

"This is Central. Get a crew out to K-R31 station immediately and pick up No. 1124-BRX."

"Emergency?"

"Naw. We cut it off when we noticed the overload . . . Don't bother fixing it. The BRX series company will be disfranchised tomorrow. All their boxes will have to be pulled out of the circuit."

"Oh-oh! That means someone was caught in transit."

"The tote board here shows two activations after breakdown."

"Any way of finding out who?"

"Only if it turns out that someone saw them enter just before the overload."

"Darn! Not a transit disruption on record in over fifty-years—not since that young geologist got lost. And now—two at one time! Morton, what the hell happens to a person and the activated receiver when a transmitter flunks out like that?"

"That's the unanswerable, son. Nobody knows. The only way to find out is to force a breakdown,

take the route and learn first-hand . . . The only thing wrong with that is the curious guy doesn't come back either."

"What's your idea, Morton?"

"Well, some of the brain-boys think the matt-trans are potential temporal displacement contraptions—if they could be controlled. They believe that in the conversion of matter into transmittable corpuscular-wave units, a time-variable factor is generated. The factor is always controlled by the balance in the circuit that determines where the object will come out and how soon. But some believe that when the distance-over-time-in-transmission regulator goes dead, transmission time automatically increases to the first instant relative to the final possible integral multiple of the fundamental frequency."

"Which means a helluva long time . . ."

" . . . in transmission. Some of the brain-boys have taken the problem to the calculators and come away with an answer in the neighborhood of seventy-five thousand years."

"Damn!"

"But there's no way of checking their theory—at least not until another seventy-four thousand, nine hundred years have passed. Must be a lot of hooey, though. Everybody laughs at it."

"We'd just better make damned sure all the BRXs are junked."

"They'll probably be smashed as thoroughly as the ancient A-1s were

IMAGINATION

in the first decade of matter transmission, over a hundred years ago—when the rate of interrupted transits was measurable."

KEN forced himself to remain rigid, silent, while Carol raced past his hiding place. Several minutes later he returned with cautious steps to the base of the plateau and clawed his way back to its surface.

The land sloped upward in the direction in which she was now searching. He could even stand upright without fear of being spotted—at least for a while.

Suddenly his hand went into a pocket and withdrew the compact agent's communicator, put it to his ear. His special channel was dead. He twisted the dial to cover all other official frequencies . . . Nothing. Then he spent a minute going through all the commercial wave-lengths. He could not raise a sound—not even a hum. Either the receiver was dead, or . . . But the alternative was impossible! What could disable all transmitters simultaneously?

He frowned and scanned the panorama of weird formations etched out of red soil and rock. Where was he? Why would a matter receiver be located in this God-forsaken place? Why wasn't there a companion transmitter nearby? In the absence of one, how could he transmit himself back to civilization to deliver the Plan in time?

It was possible, he remembered, to convert a receiver unit into a trans-

mitter in a couple of hours—possibly in six or eight hours with bare hands. He looked at the booth. Its input leads were sheared off almost even with its base. Even if he could convert it, where would he get the power to operate it? Suddenly he thought of the power pack of his pocket transceiver. That might do!

Walking up the slope, he dropped to his stomach and looked out over the edge of the tilted plateau into the sector where Carol was. He saw her immediately—a thousand yards or so away, at a distance that made the ion gun ineffective.

She stiffened and whirled to face full in his direction. Her sharpened vision had detected even the slight motion entailed in his peering over the ledge. She raised the gun and fired. The beam faded into nonexistence before it covered half the distance.

He rose. Perhaps if he could impress upon her the gravity of their situation he could penetrate the shield of hypno-conditioning that had turned her into a relentless, purposeful machine that refused to recognize him except as someone who had had access to the Plan and who must be destroyed.

He tucked the portfolio under his arm, cupped hands around his mouth and shouted, "Carol. Cut out the shooting. Can't you see we are in real trouble?"

She dropped the gun to her side and walked slowly down the slope toward the first gully that separated

them. But her determined stride betrayed no slackening of intent.

"Look," he swung a hand through the air. "God knows where we are! If we don't find a way to get the Master Plan back soon, they'll start their damned war right away. When I don't radio in on schedule they might assume there's no hope of recovering the Plan."

With startling agility, she leaped across the gully, ignoring him.

HE seized the portfolio and hurled it over the ledge. If that didn't snap her out of it, he would have to flee before she came any closer. The leather case thudded to the ground ten feet in front of her. She was close enough now for him to hear her labored breathing.

Bewilderment on her face, she halted in front of the case. Would she be satisfied?

She looked uncertainly at the case, then at Ken.

"Kill him," she said in a loud, emotionless voice. Her eyes stared ahead unseeing. "Kill all of them and then get the Plan . . . Kill them; destroy the Plan and report by radio . . . Then commit suicide."

An icy chill gripped Ken. She was conditioned, as no doubt were a score of other agents, to slaughter any number of persons she observed in contact with the records—*even herself!* Then he remembered she was a Class B operator. Perhaps the A's who had been conditioned

were spared the self-destruction order.

Grasping the portfolio under her arm, she disappeared behind a group of large boulders. Three minutes later she returned with only the gun, the leather case apparently having been hidden until she could carry out the first of her four indelibly memorized orders.

Carol came forward slowly, her steps falling into the rhythm of the intonation she had begun, "Kill—destroy Plan—report—suicide; kill—destroy . . ."

"Wait!" Ken shouted desperately. "For God's sake, Carol, don't you see . . ."

He stopped hopelessly. The words were having no effect. His hand went out and found a rock twice the size of his fist. He hurled it. His aim was perfect. It shot out with almost no arc—straight for the girl's legs.

At first she seemed not to see it. But at the last second, when he was almost sure it had already rammed into a thigh, she side-stepped in a blur of motion.

Then she was clawing her way down the side of the last chasm that separated them, her head twisted over a shoulder to watch for more missiles.

Reluctantly, he pushed away from the ledge and raced down the slope, surveying the unbroken desolation as he ran.

Fleeing toward the protection offered by the gullies, he felt like an anachronism in a wholly alien en-

vironment—one in which life had simply failed to evolve. And while he raced from the peril of the crazed girl he recoiled from the concept of being totally alone in the frightening, outlandish nether-world.

CROSSING the broad, hard-surface stretch between the last two gullies, Ken told himself, was what had temporarily thrown her off his trail. He had left no footprints that even her synthetically keen eyes could find. He had departed from the desolate area of many gullies and was now stumbling through a broad expanse of rough, rock-strewn terrain.

Some of the rocks, he noticed, bore traces of having once been level surfaces with straight edges . . . No natural rocks, these! They were the remains of something man-made!

It was as though a city had stood here—a proud city that had bowed under a terrific avalanche of glacial ice. An avalanche that had leveled haughty skyscrapers and reduced all to rubble. But could a glacier possibly approach this close to the equator?

His eyes roved to a familiar object to the left—a square form that he recognized immediately as a matter receiver. But he could see it was an obsolete model in an advanced stage of deterioration, with one of its sides caved in and with its base half rotted away. He did not stop to inspect it.

Instead he continued toward a

purplish-yellow sun which was covering the last few seconds of arc that separated it from the horizon. And suddenly Ken felt the brunt of his fatigue and the sting of thirst.

Ahead, rearing above the ruins, loomed the sort of structure he sought—what at one time might have been a wide wall. Its top was flat, but one of its ends slipped down at a negotiable incline into the maze of irregular geometrical forms.

Climbing the formation, he dropped on his chest in a natural indentation that offered concealment from the surface.

Then he thought about Carol, back there searching for him, and wondered whether he would succeed in losing her in the ruins so he could return to try to convert the receiver. He was trying to prescribe a gentle circle in his flight. But, would she keep up with him and deny him the chance to alter the circuits and find where she had hidden the portfolio? Could he find some way of overcoming her unnatural physical superiority and take her back with him? He knew he couldn't leave her here—not knowing where the place was or whether he would ever be able to find it again.

Pitying the girl, he realized that locked somewhere in her mind were impressions of all that had occurred since she stepped through the receiver—locked in but eclipsed by the artificially induced compulsion to kill. In his case, he was aware

of each new bizarre factor of the strange environment as it arose. He had time to accept one incongruity before the next one lurched up to challenge his rationality. But with her it would be different . . . Even if by some miracle she should escape the final suicide compulsion, all the maddening realizations would be released at one time from her subconscious into her conscious where they would simultaneously assault her sanity.

In the darkness that seemed to press against him with a smothering force, he turned his head toward the north to seek out the familiar stars of Ursa Major.

But there was no Big Dipper close to the horizon! Could it be that the stars had changed? Or was it merely that this new site was somewhere in the Southern Hemisphere and he was gazing at an unfamiliar heaven?

Fear of being alone in an unknown nether-world struck him suddenly and he realized how desperately he wanted Carol—a rational, normal Carol. He wanted to take her hand and cling to it forever. But then his thoughts went back to the more pressing matter of the briefcase and returning it so that millions would not die.

The moon seemed to lurch out of the ground in the east. But what a moon it was! Fully twice the size of the Lunar orb that had played its duplicate role in the world he had known up until a few hours ago!

A faint, melodious voice swept suddenly across the ruins and Ken sat upright. A mellow voice that sang a plaintive tune. For a moment he imagined it had come from his left. Then there was the impression it was all around him.

Was it possible Carol was breaking free of her obsessions? Had the hypno-induced compulsions worn off as would a drug? Had she survived the shock of sudden realization and come to look for him, seeking the consolation that he himself wanted so desperately?

He strained his ears to catch the voice again. But it was gone.

Then he saw her, partly silhouetted by the giant moon, as she climbed to the top of a slanted slab. The gun still in her hand; she came forward from rock to rock.

When she was almost even with the wall, he ceased breathing. His head was half exposed as he kept her in sight, but he was afraid to withdraw it lest her acute vision detect the motion. He had been wrong—she had not been released from the mental seizure. Her face was rigid, determined, and her weapon was held half-drawn in front of her.

As though she had sensed his nearness, she halted, tensed. When he could hold his breath no longer, he let the air escape with delicate control.

But it was no use! She had heard the almost inaudible sound! He lost her arm in a haze of indistinct motion as she spun around and

aimed toward the top of the wall.

The beam arched up and over and slammed into stone a foot away from his shoulder. Ken recoiled, hurled himself over the other side of the wall and plunged into the shadowy depth. His feet rammed onto the surface and he hinged his knees to roll with the impact.

But he had landed on a sloping slab and floundered forward, overbalanced. He reeled, grabbed at a boulder to steady himself, missed and crashed into the sharp corner of another rock.

Even as the pain shot through his chest to convince him he had fractured at least one rib, he toppled to the surface of the slab and rolled to its edge, falling off into a narrow crevice. The fall was to a soft, residual loam surface, some four feet down.

His clutching fingers enclosed handfuls of pebbles as he fought the initial surge of pain. But, ignoring the stabbing agony, he rose and peered out over the ledge.

She was climbing over a low spot in the wall, not yet looking in his direction. He hurled one of the pebbles. It rose in a shallow arc over her head and clattered on boulders on the other side of her.

Carol whirled in the direction of the sound and raced ahead. He hurled a second stone as he forced back a grunt of pain. The missile went a little farther, landing still ahead of her, and she raced on. Then he put all his strength in a final heave. The third stone fell

well ahead of the girl. Then, careful not to make any betraying sound, he lowered himself into the concealment of the crevice and fought the numbing pain in his chest.

"I'm lonely, darling. Wherever you are, please come out."

The voice—husky and siren-like—was what had withdrawn him from the half-sleep of pained exhaustion. He rose, again forcing slowness in his motions to avoid detection.

Carol, perhaps fifty yards away, was limned in brilliant moonlight. She sat on a slab in a pose obviously intended to be alluring. The moon was low in the west. He realized she had probably searched for him through most of the night and had returned to the area where she had lost him.

"This is a frightful place, dear," her voice had taken on a musical inflection, "and I'm so afraid—and alone. Please come out."

If she were not under the effects of the hypno-treatment, Ken assured himself, she would realize how illogical and ill-directed her actions were and she would not be trying this ruse.

"Can't I convince you you've got to come to me?" she pleaded. The smile, although a forced one, was a vibrant expression.

"Watch," she urged suddenly, leaping to the next boulder. Holding the gun over her shoulder, she progressed from stone to stone for a distance of perhaps three hun-

dred feet. Then she tossed the weapon. It clattered to a level slab, skidded a few feet and came to rest.

Then she raced back to the boulder which she had abandoned and again perched on it, drawing her knees up in the grip of both forearms.

"Now . . . does that convince you, darling?"

Ken remained silent. He could never reach the gun first! And, if he did, could he use it on her to save a world from destruction? If he could only get his arms around her—pin hers to her side! Then he could hold her, truss her up, take her back with him. But there was no chance of his matching her agility. Even if he could reach her while she did not have the gun there would be no possibility of restraining her—not as long as she was under the influence of the accelerant.

"Please, darling," she pouted. "Don't keep me waiting." Her hands snaked down her sides, across the curves of her hips and along her thighs in exaggerated movement.

He wanted to leap from the crevice and race into the forest and to whatever awaited him there. But he knew he could never leave her and surrender himself to abject loneliness and despair in this world apparently so remotely removed from his own.

Forlornly, he whispered her name. "I knew you'd answer," she laughed.

HE had forgotten about her hypersensitivity! She had heard the whisper—and yet she made no threatening move! Was it part of her deception?

Turning her head suddenly toward him, she coaxed, "Please come over."

He checked the impulse to try to creep away. It was almost daylight, but the brightening eastern sky brought no encouragement.

"Think, Carol!" he cried out abruptly. "Look around you! These ruins! That huge moon! Something's wrong! Don't you realize something's fantastically unnatural? We're no longer in the world we know! We're the only two humans alive! We . . ."

"We are wasting time," she laughed. But it was apparent the laugh was part of her plan to lure him out, so unnatural was it. "The moon is beautiful," she continued, "but we could enjoy it more if you were not so—reluctant."

"Carol! Carol!" he beseeched, pressing a hand over his side as though it might ease the pain. "You are an agent. I'm an agent. You were hypnotized to find the counter-agent who got the Master Plan—to kill him. But, darling, it's all wrong! Don't you understand? I'm not an enemy agent! I'm Ken! We've got to get the Plan back! We only have a few hours left!"

He had made a mistake. His untimely appeal, he realized, had only seeped through her twisted sense of logic sufficiently to suggest that

perhaps her ruse to entice him into her grasp was failing. He knew he had taken the wrong approach when she rose and intoned:

"The Plan must be destroyed! The agent who had access to it must die. He must not reveal a single item in the Plan. War would result. Horrible war."

He saw that her conditioned mind was merely repeating instructions together with the hypo-induced arguments that had been instilled as a step to make it impossible for her to swerve from her assignment.

She leaped from her perch and raced back toward the slab where she had deposited the gun. A rising sun bathed her form in a deep pink tinge.

KEN abandoned the crevice, grunting as his pained side contacted the protuberance of the ledge, and raced in the opposite direction. The wall which had sheltered him the night before again offered temporary cover as he fled from the girl.

An area of large boulders and slanting slabs beckoned and he dashed toward it. As he skirted to the rear of the nearest boulder he hazarded a glance back. Carol was coming around the wall. She fired as she ran. The beam struck the ground immediately in front of the boulder.

Beyond was a stretch of densely strewn pebbles, ground minutely by the glacier and not since washed away. He crossed the area and

found the protection of more huge rocks that seemed to balance themselves precariously on the side of a slope.

Working his way between the massive boulders, he glanced back again and saw that Carol had lost one of her shoes. And, as the unprotected foot contacted sharp pebbles, reflex actions were set up to beat through the cloud of false intent and force her to tread cautiously.

He reached the top of the irregular rise and smiled weakly as he saw another stretch of gravel ahead. His flight took him back eastward now. And the soft horizon line of tree tops grew more distinct as the ruins became sparser and the area of gullies loomed closer. Twice, while he ran, he spotted matter receivers in various stages of weather-beaten deterioration. There was no time, however, to wonder over their presence.

The girl—God, would she never tire! Even hopped up with the accelerant and the psychological treatment, it was abnormal for a woman to display that amount of stamina.

Suddenly the line of vegetation was no longer an unreal section of the vague horizon. He had reached it! The lure of lush shade offered by tall, dense-foliaged trees was a paradise which he resisted with only the greatest reluctance, realizing it contained no occasional stretch of gravel to slow the girl.

Paralleling the trees, he continued southward across the rock-strewn

plain. Ahead was another area of eroded earth. On a far plateau in that section he could see the square outline of the receiver booth. He increased pace. . . . If only he could find water at the bottom of one of the ravines! If he could only find a gully with a hard-stone bed—one that branched and branched again—and offered a hiding place where he could lose the girl and rest! If he could just trick her, and gain time to work on the receiver!

But Carol came swiftly now, threatening to overtake him even before he reached the eroded area.

THE first gully was deep enough to offer temporary concealment. He leaped into it, traveled eastward in its bed for a hundred feet and turned with it southward. Beyond the curve stretched a long corridor hewn out of rough earth and flanked by bare, unbroken walls. Dispiritedly, he cursed his luck.

It seemed like an eternity later when he finally reached the curving end of the chasm's length. The girl had already appeared around the bend behind him and was drawing inexorably closer.

He reached the curve and raced around it. The gully ended abruptly. He clambered up its slightly sloping side and fled southward once more, his lungs threatening to burst. Clothes soggy with perspiration and sticky hair clinging to his face, he was numbed to the other pains of his body. He pushed doggedly on.

The next chasm lay some hundred feet ahead. As he raced toward it, his eyes went longingly to the comfortable shade of the forest.

But the boundary of trees had receded at this point. Like a funnel, the bare land of the plain swept, corridor-like into the forest. He looked down the natural corridor.

It was not a nether-world! There were houses in the forest! A settlement! As he ran he could see structures made of logs. Others, larger buildings, of stone. It was a large settlement—consisting of perhaps a hundred buildings. And there were people—scores of persons—in the central street!

Coming toward him from the forest was a man in a white robe, pulling a crude cart. But the man did not notice him and Ken was too dazed to wonder whether he could hope for any help from these people.

He plunged into the next gully. Two hundred feet from his point of entry it curved. Then it forked. He took the left branch. The girl hadn't yet entered and had not witnessed his choice of directions. A hundred feet farther there was another fork. Again he took the left. This time the passage stretched only fifty or sixty feet before it split once more.

He repeated his first two choices, went a few feet farther, found a crevice half-hidden by two massive boulders and protected by an overhanging ledge. Its bottom was covered with rocks of varying sizes.

He crept into the shade and tried desperately to stifle his breathing in order to hear whether the girl was coming.

Ten minutes later he decided he had eluded her for the time being.

Then came the grim realization there was nothing he could do. Eventually she would find him—even if he could manage to retreat to the settlement which lured him with a curiosity that should have been, but wasn't, suppressed by the impossible situation in which he found himself.

He pulled off his coat and used it to mop perspiration on his face. Then he tossed it aside.

If only there were some way he could defeat the hypno-induced compulsion! He knew he could counteract it with neither pleas nor reasoning. Nor could he hope to capture the girl and hold her prisoner until it wore off. For it would not disappear until she had accomplished her fourth purpose of self-destruction — long after she stood erect with the hot gun in her hand and looked down at the spot where his body had lain before it was disintegrated.

He stiffened and repeated the phrase under his breath — *looked down at the spot where his body had lain before it was disintegrated!*

Ken lurched to his feet, retrieved the coat, kicked off his shoes and stepped out of his trousers.

WORKING rapidly, noiselessly, he collected the larger stones

in the chasm. Laying the trousers face-down in the center of them, he filled the legs and waist with larger stones and stretched the cloth tight over them. Next he placed still larger rocks around the spot where his chest would be if he were in the trousers and laid the coat over them. Its arms he stuffed with smaller rocks and bent around under the coat. Then he placed the shoes, toes outward, in their respective places at the end of each trousers leg.

The head of the mock body posed a problem. But after pondering it a while, he rolled a large boulder over and laid it atilt against the top-most rock that represented the shoulders.

Backing off, he surveyed the job. It might do the trick! A person who rushed up on the scene with an overpowering desire to destroy her victim would fire first, instinctively—even before supersensitivity induced by the accelerant could message her mind that the body was a dummy.

He retreated to the far corner of the crevice, found another large rock, shouted for help as loud as he could and hurled the rock down at the ground. The resulting thud echoed through the gully.

Then he quietly forced himself into the tight corner beyond another boulder under the ledge and waited.

Carol made no attempt to conceal the sounds of her approach. It was from above, on the ground level. He kept the sibilation of his breathing

at as minimum a degree of audibility as possible. Then he remembered his small transceiver, still in the pocket of his coat. But it was too late to retrieve it now. Anyway, Carol would still have hers, since it was an instrument necessary for the execution of her third directive.

There was a thud as she leaped into the chasm, her hypersensitive hearing having led her directly there. Then a blinding illumination flashed into the darkened confines under the ledge and the rock filled clothing exploded in a smoke-vomiting puff.

Carol staggered backward and the gun fell from her hand. Then she screamed unrestrainedly.

He had won! The mental impact on realizing she had killed the man she was going to marry had snapped her bonds of hypno-conditioning and had released her from the other compulsions.

He rushed out in time to catch her as she fainted.

SOBS wracked her body as he held her close and patted her shoulder reassuringly. He had retrieved the gun and had carried her out of the gully. They were on an elevation from which they could see the matter receiver, only a few hundred feet away.

"Come on, Carol. It's all over now."

"But—but I tried to kill you!" she said convulsively. "I was going to kill you and commit suicide!"

When would she regain control?

When would her nerves quiet? There couldn't be very much time left to convert the receiver—if it could be done.

"Snap out of it!" he gripped her shoulders roughly. "Nothing that happened was your fault!"

"Of course it wasn't my fault!" she agreed vehemently. "That's the trouble with the whole filthy mess. How low can humanity get? If I had turned crazy as an individual and tried to kill you and myself, it would have been understandable. But for the government to take it upon itself . . ."

"But Carol," he protested. "It was a necessity. It—"

She would not listen to his counter argument. "Oh, Ken! It was horrible! I knew what I was doing all along. But I couldn't stop! I almost went mad trying to prevent myself from finding a way to kill you—trying to cry out and tell you it wasn't me acting like that, that it was a monster headquarters had made!"

"Carol," he said with forced calm. "We have such a short time left if we're going to get the Plan back in time to prevent war . . . Where did you hide it?"

She pushed him away. "I won't tell you!"

"What?"

"I said I won't tell you. Let them start their war! Let them kill one another off like the animals they are!"

"You can't do that, Carol!"

"Oh, can't I?" she exclaimed

spitefully.

"Think of the hundreds of millions who will be killed! The millions of young men and women who hoped to be married, like we do! There won't be a city left in three days! There won't be a church left to get married in! When headquarters hypno-conditioned you they weren't thinking of your personal case, your personal interests. They might have been thinking of the millions of others like you—like us."

Her head dropped and her shoulders sagged. A heavy sigh indicated submission.

"Where is the Master Plan?"

"I'll show you," she said emotionlessly.

She turned and led him southward, toward the receiver booth—toward the series of small plateaus and gullies beyond.

"While I work on the receiver," he suggested, "you can try to attract help from the settlement. Maybe they can tell us where we are: how we can . . ."

But Carol had halted abruptly and was staring rigidly ahead.

A small curler of smoke rose lazily beyond the plateau on which the receiver stood. Frowning with misgiving, he leaped into the gully on his right and raced toward the smoke. The girl followed.

Panting, and with the safety lock of the weapon released, he climbed out of the ravine and onto the plateau where Carol had left the Plan.

AN old man dressed in a white robe that seemed to melt into

his long gray hair at the shoulder line sat on his haunches before a small fire built among a triangle of stones. A crude metal pan was balanced atop the stones. An aroma not unlike coffee issued forth from the volatile liquid in visible fumes.

But Ken's eyes fastened themselves hypnotically on only the open portfolio which the man gripped in one hand and the page of the Plan which he held close to his eyes in the other. While Ken looked, he crumpled the sheet, tossed it on the fire and withdrew another page from the case.

"Stop!" Ken shouted, bringing the gun up and rushing forward.

If he returned to headquarters without the Plan and with Carol apparently having escaped from the compulsion to kill herself, they would never believe the weird story he would try to tell them and the war would start.

The man looked at Ken, then at the gun, and smiled. "Hello," he said. "Welcome."

Ken snatched the brief case from under his arm and looked into it. It was empty! He jerked the page from the old one's hand, slipped it back in the portfolio and handed the case to Carol.

"Who are . . . ?" she began, addressing the man.

"Do you realize what you've done?" Ken shouted. The old one cringed under the impact of heavy words. "You're the cause of the worst war the human race has ever known!"

The robed individual shifted his position and smiled benignly. "It might be interpreted that way," he said calmly. "But really, the papers don't matter any more. If you hadn't brought them along, they would have been dust for eons."

Carol gasped and clutched Ken's arm desperately. "*Ken, don't you realize? Don't you know where we are?*"

He frowned, trying not to let the suspicion well into a conviction. But the evidence was unmistakable—the new size of the moon; the fact his radio could not raise a single station; the altered appearance of the stars; the strange settlement of stone and log-cabin structures; the robed individual's cryptic words.

"We're in the future!" he gasped.

"Some seventy-five thousand years, more or less," the man laughed, rising. "Back in our time, there was no way for them to find out what happened to people who disappeared in the matter transmitters and to the receivers that went with them. But we know. You see, you got here through the transmitter, just like the rest of us did. Only, you two are the first in over fifty years—and probably the last ones who will ever come, if the information in those papers was correct."

"All those in the settlement are—are persons displaced in time by the transmitters?" Ken asked incredulously.

"Most of them are descendants of those who came through first. I was the last one. We kept the settle-

ments by the ruins of the cities so others who came through would find us. We need all we can get if the race is going to have a fair chance of catching on again—after getting its second wind."

Carol had started to whimper again. She held Ken's arm fearfully.

"Don't you see, Ken?" Her voice was heavy with apprehension. "The war came. Civilization was destroyed. For countless thousands of years there were no humans on earth. Then, only a handful of years ago, the people who disappeared in the transmitters in our time started popping out again. Those deteriorating receivers scattered among the ruins—each one of them indicates a person lost in a transmitter and displaced into this time!"

The old man used the hem of his robe to lift the pan off the fire. He poured some of the liquid into an earthen cup which he withdrew from his clothing and sipped it.

"For years," he said. "I've been searching the ruins for evidence of what happened to man. You see, geology and archaeology were my main interests back in your time." He sighed, looking at the brief case Carol held. "But now I don't have to search any longer."

"There's a way back!" Ken insisted. "There must be! If a transmitter can . . ."

"Of course there's a way back," the aged individual agreed. "Clarkson, he is a physicist, worked

on the problem for forty years with the displaced receivers before he figured out that it required only five simple circuit changes to turn a receiver into a transmitter, reverse the forces involved, simulate the breakdown and send a person backward in time exactly the same number of years he had come forward."

"But why didn't you do it?" Ken demanded. "Why didn't you return?"

The man sighed. "It takes a while to regain lost technology. We just last week got an ore smelter working. The steam engine's next. We're still a good ten or twelve years from perfecting a source of electrical power—which we would need to activate the converted matter receiver . . . But, now that I've read the information in that brief case, I'm quite sure we shall never again think of going back."

"I've got the electrical power!" Ken shouted, defiantly. Then he turned to Carol. "Show him your radio transceiver."

She fished the small object from its cache in her clothing.

"We'll convert the matter receiver," Ken continued determinedly. "We'll get back in time to stop the war. We'll get your Clarkson. He'll have to show us how to rearrange the circuits. We'll . . ."

"They'll never believe us, Ken," Carol said grimly. "If we show up without the Plan and with me alive, they'll be convinced the enemy has had access to the Plan. The fact that I haven't committed suicide will be

taken as proof I was in contact with the enemy and they will think our entire argument is an instrument of the other powers."

Ken was mute in indecision for a moment. The old man broke the silence.

"There is really nothing to cause so much concern," he said. "If you will just read the last paragraph on the last page you'll understand why none of us in any of these settlements would want to return. It would only be a return to . . ."

His voice trailed off as he shook his head sullenly and poured another cup of brew.

Ken took the portfolio from Carol and, with a trembling hand, withdrew the last page, turned his eyes apprehensively to the final paragraph as Carol read over his shoulder:

"And, regardless of any relevant or irrelevant factor, Attack Plans Two, Three, Four and Six will be initiated by this government at 8 a. m. 21 September, 2085. The basis for this date of implementing World War IV is recently acquired and incontestable evidence that the enemy plans to attack 25 September, 2085."

Ken crumpled the paper and let it fall. Then he nudged it into the fire with his foot.

"September 21!" Carol gasped. "That's only five days off!"

"It was five days off," the old man corrected, "some seventy-five thousand years ago."

Without speaking, Carol let the

radio tránsceiver drop from her trembling fingers. Then she ground it into the dust of the plateau with her shoe.

The man took them each by an arm. "Come, we'll return to the settlement. Either of you a doctor?"

Ken muttered a negative answer. Carol shook her head. The man quickened his pace toward the forest.

"Chemist?" His voice was still hopeful.

"No," Ken said embarrassedly. "Farmer? Electrician? Teacher?" Each query educed negative head shakes.

Ken looked ahead at the inviting comfort of the forest and its attractive settlement. Then he looked at Carol and returned the smile that was her eager expression.

"Oh, well," the robed individual sighed, stepping from between them and walking ahead, "there's always the matter of increasing the population."

THE END

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WATCH FOR THEIR STORIES IN COMING ISSUES!

PREFERRED POSITION

by Dave Dryfoos

Does your job bore you? Are you just plain tired of working for a living? Well, meet a man from the future—who'd gladly trade places! . . .

THE bed woke them. "Time to get up, dears," it cooed. "Time to get up and greet the sun . . . time to get up . . ." Then the supporting magnetism faded and let their mattress drift gently to the soft warm floor.

Janet turned and opened her eyes, pouting at Les. He scowled back, grumbled something, and rolled away. She shook his film-coated shoulder.

"Come on, Les. Come on, you'll feel better after coffee."

"Don't want any," he snarled.

But the damage had been done. At the word "coffee" a grotesque marionette opened the bedroom door and minced in with two steaming cups on a tray, swinging them artfully so that they appeared likely to spill, but didn't.

For some years now, that dance had left Janet unamused. She was about to say so when Les growled, "These darned dolls are a nuisance. I wish you'd order a plain, automatic dispenser!"

"They're even more boring," Janet argued, sitting up. Her gauzy film-dress and sleepy face made her

look appealingly childlike. She was fifty-five.

Les was sixty, with a full head of blond hair atop six and a half feet of slim solid flesh. He sat up with the expression of an exasperated six-year-old.

"Go away!" he told the doll. It did.

"But I wanted some!" Janet wailed. She was careful, though, not to use the words that would cause the doll to return.

Neither did Les. He said, "Why don't we take a couple of pills and go back to sleep till tomorrow? There isn't a darned thing to do."

"There never is," Janet said. Then noting she'd inadvertently agreed with her husband, she quickly added, "But we can't sleep — we did that yesterday. If we don't move around we'll practically stop eating, and anyway the neighbors will miss us. First thing you know we'll be accused of either a hunger-strike or immobility. Then they'll enslave us for attempting suicide!" She sniffed in self-pity at the thought.

"Ah, honk 'em!" Les said. "Slavery'd at least be a change. And

slaves have something to do!"

"Don't talk nonsense," Janet said tartly. "You know perfectly well they always torture slaves."

"Yeah . . . But I just can't face this any longer! I've got sixty-five more years of longevity, according to the doctors — and they're never wrong, curse them! Sixty-five more years without the possibility of illness, want, risk . . . Even an accident is unlikely. Nothing's going to happen in all that time! Jan, I just can't face it."

"Isn't that just like a man?" she scoffed. "You know very well I've got *seventy* years to go — five still to wait before I can even have my first child! You're just being selfish!"

They glowered at each other. Then Les rubbed her cheek with the back of his hand, and smiled.

"Thanks, kid," he said. "You really had me going for a minute. Now I feel better!"

PLEASED with the compliment, Janet concocted an extra-fancy combination of films to spray on herself for the morning's wear. When it was in place, she ordered a large breakfast and arranged to have the waiter-doll do a special dance-routine while serving.

But Les's smile had vanished with the whiskers he'd rubbed off. He picked at his food, turned his back on the dancing, and afterward yawned away the few minutes they spent on their apartment's terrace,

stared at by fifty thousand neighbors who lacked anything better to do. When Les wandered idly off, Janet followed.

Les went to the living room, projected a book onto the ceiling, switched it off without reading, played with the glowing phosphors that lighted the room in colors he varied jarringly, fiddled with the console of the perfume aerosol and created a stink, and then, in sheer despair, turned on the puppet-set.

It's lighted screen listed the necessary dolls and props, so he laid them out. Soon the three-foot stage reflected a broadcast picture of the State Executive Office. A stringless, formally-dressed puppet sat at a desk, its blank face a transmitted facsimile of the Governor's.

" . . . the last time I can make this announcement," the Governor was saying into a hidden microphone. "The tests are to begin at noon. Jobs are now open! I repeat: jobs are now open! Men only, of course. But if any of you fellows out there suffer from boredom — and who doesn't in this wonderful State of ours that by virtue of the New Energy-Sources guarantees leisured security to each citizen — if, I repeat, you suffer from ennui, then why not apply for a job?

"Do it now — no further vacancies will occur for years, and we have some really desirable positions open this morning. Appointments will be made strictly on merit, as usual, with a job for every appli-

cant and the best job for the top man.

"Though it's true that losers in this competition are required to assume for life the less desirable duties that our civilization imposes, I assure you that isn't as bad as it sounds. I was pretty far down the list in my day, yet I only have to be Governor . . .

"So won't you please apply? I want a *lot* of competition!"

The stage darkened, and the puppet got up and walked to its box. Before the lights could go up on the next program, Les switched the set off.

"What do you think?" he asked Janet.

"I don't know," she said. "Nobody in *my* family has ever worked."

"Mine, either. But I once knew a fellow who'd tried for a job. He seemed o.k. to me, but he sure didn't get a good one! Had a clerical position, with business machines, and their output was geared down to spread the work. So he didn't have enough to do . . . just stacked punched cards or something every day for eighty years!"

"Oh, you'd do better than that, dear!"

"Maybe. Point is, there *are* jobs worse than no job at all!"

"I'm not so sure!" Janet said, suddenly determined. "Only a few minutes ago you weren't very happy about the idle days ahead. Why not take a chance?"

"Take a chance? What kind of language is that? 'Chance' went out along with disease and poverty and crime and accidents. You're way off base, Janet!"

"But you have a chance — oh, all right! — an opportunity, then, if you like that better, to get a *good* job. Now, if I were a man —"

"But you're not . . . Still . . . maybe I'll try it . . ."

For the first time in a month or two, Janet kissed him warmly. And after she'd helped him into his wings and seen him off from the terrace, she felt a strange warm glow of anticipation. Not since she'd married had there been need for a decision that could bring change into her life. This was a Day!

IT was a Day for a lot of others, too. She learned that from the noon broadcast of the test ceremony.

"In my time," the Governor said, speaking from the Capitol's rotunda, "in my time a hundred aspirants was considered a good turnout. Today's applicants total a thousand! We haven't actually got a thousand jobs lined up, but we'll get 'em! And I'm privileged to announce, now that the list of competitors has closed, that we do have the astoundingly large number of ten — repeat, ten — genuinely desirable appointments to make."

Ten good jobs for a thousand applicants didn't sound to Janet like an astoundingly large number. She'd been sprawled on a magnetically-

positioned pad half-way between floor and ceiling, but she sat up when the Governor stopped talking, and with a twinge of genuine and unwonted anxiety watched the long file of applicants as they approached in turn the brain-wave analyzer, the voice-operated sorter that would add their life-files to current test results, and the officials who judged each man's configuration.

She wished they'd announce the test results publicly, but knew they wouldn't. So, when Les had gone through — about twenty minutes after the start — Janet shut off the broadcast, dissolved her dress-films, and had herself rubbed by the massage machine. The morning's suspense was proving too much for her, and she didn't want to have a headache when Les came home.

But even the mechanical masseuse couldn't rub away her strange feelings. Not since marriage had Janet felt curiosity as to the future.

What if he got so dull they never even argued about anything? She shivered at the thought—but then she smiled. And for the next hour Janet lay under the soothing massage and gave herself up to the delightful new pleasure of worrying.

WHEN Les returned, shadowing the terrace in his descent like some portentous bird, Janet began to shake. Without even waiting to kiss him, she said, "How was it? How did you do?"

Les grinned teasingly. "Help me

moult, first," he said. "I'm tired."

Unable to get anything else out of him until it was done, she tore his wings off damagingly, kissed him, and said, "Now won't you say something?"

"I'm hungry!"

"No!" She danced her impatience like a little girl. "Tell me!"

But even as she pouted, her eyes sparkled in anticipation.

"I start tomorrow," he said.

"Did you get the best job?"

"Nope. No, I really didn't."

"What, then?"

"Second best!"

"Oh, wonderful! What is it?"

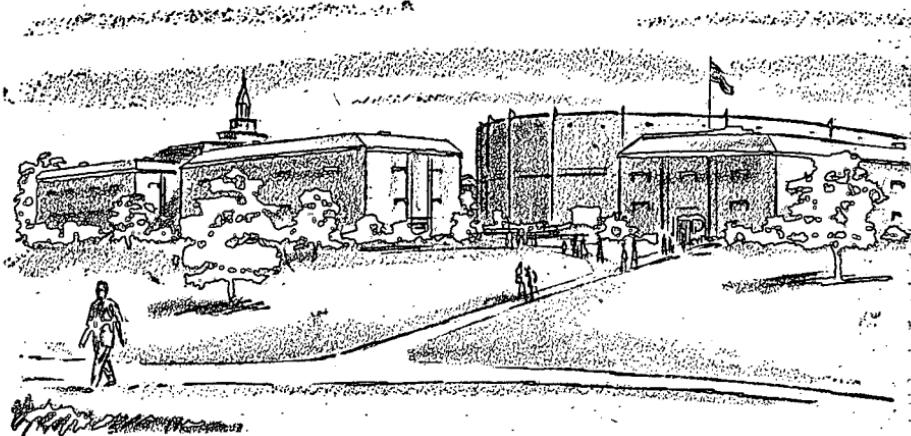
"Rigger and high-climber — topping trees, setting structural iron, fixing flag-poles — that sort of thing. Powderman was first."

"Oh, rigger's wonderful!" Visions of his future work flashed across her mind, implanted there by childhood hours spent watching other members of this elite profession at their thrilling work. She knew there could be broken cables, falling pulleys, snapped booms, dropped loads — every day would have its interesting possibilities!

"My darling!" She threw her arms around him and was momentarily silenced by his kiss.

Then she stepped back, looked admiringly up at him, and said, "Oh, I'm so happy for you! And so proud! I'm going right in and order up a nice big meal. I know you'll enjoy this one — it really *might* be your last!"





If Karl's theory on reality was true, then
Freda knew their happy marriage would end — not
with the now: "Until death," but: "Until time—

o o o Do Us Part⁹⁹

By
Louis G. Daniels

HE could stop him. Freda realized that as she held out her glass with a forced steadiness to conceal the tremors that raced within her.

Dark red claret swirled from the chilled bottle. The wrinkled hand that poured was one which reflected no indecision—only calm determination.

Karl filled his own glass and leaned back. Flickering light from two candelabra danced in sparkling

reflections against handles of polished silverware and rims of shining china.

"It isn't as though I were a young man, Freda," he said, staring into a wavering candle flame.

"Yes, I know, Karl." There was no emotion in her voice. At least, she imagined there was none.

He leaned farther back and hollow shadows on his face skittered into a new paradox of resolute indifference. In the dim, unsteady

IMAGINATION

light, his tousled hair was not quite so gray. Nor did his face seem nearly as streaked with the evidences of many years.

But his eyes, Freda thought—as she stared into them, were ageless. They burned with a fierce, searching awareness that seemed to boast of the fact they had lost none of the vitality they held when he was a youth of twenty-two—when they had first met.

"A man of seventy-seven, Freda, has lived a full life, you know."

"Yes, Karl." She was being particularly complaisant. He had recited the argument so many times. And he was repeating it this last time, she knew, not to convince her as much as to assure himself he had made no mistake in his logic.

He reached across the table and placed his hand on hers. "We have spent fifty-four years together . . ."

"Fifty-four unforgettable, happy years."

He winced.

Freda wished she had not said it.

"And through all those years," she continued wistfully, "you've chafed at the bit of marital convention—perhaps even wishing you were alone, alone and free to . . . to find out."

"Not fifty-four years, darling." He clasped her hand. "It's been only thirty-four years since we first conceived of the theory."

She rose on unsteady legs and stood beside his chair, her hand on his shoulder. "Thirty-four years

of restrained wonderment—of yearning to test a hypothesis fascinating beyond description, to inject yourself into—into . . ."

"Into the ultimate experiment," he shrugged and rose.

Karl helped her to the sofa in front of the fire. "How is it that you're so understanding, Freda?"

That was the way she wanted it. She wanted him to think she understood, even though she herself was not quite aware of comprehension. Would she ever understand the insatiable thirst for knowledge of the elusive nature of reality that could separate a man from his wife after half a century?

"Your arguments are so logical darling," she laughed. "You're quite right when you say that after almost fifty-five years of devoted attention a man is entitled to his one or two remaining years of life to do with as he likes. I realize that you've got to know, Karl, and that the only way you can ever find out is by going."

It was what he wanted her to say. Even should she surrender to the rebellious compulsion and beseech him to abandon his plan, she knew she would not find the words to describe her horror of losing a husband to something other than death. And she knew there was no way of telling him that living the last two or three years with him would be worth more than all the preceding years put together.

But Karl was a scientist, she realized almost regretfully, and it was

a scientist's nature to theorize. It was his job to verify through experiment—even if the experiment required that he be the subject.

She turned her head toward him and the thing in the corner of the room caught her eye. Resentfully she jerked her gaze away from the arrangement of shining discs and madly entwining coils and rods clustered about the metal chair.

Soon she would be forced to look at them with horrified eyes while Karl eagerly lowered himself onto the seat and touched the switch. Soon. But not now. Now there were only these last few minutes with him. Biting her lips so there would be no sob, she leaned her head against his shoulder.

THE antique clock on the mantel chimed nine-fifteen. She caught her breath.

"It'll be time soon," he said.

Soon. The word struck with the clarity of the clock bell. Soon—less than an hour now. A mere forty-five minutes was all she had left. Then she would be alone—alone for the first time since Karl had taught her to forget what loneliness meant.

"Do you remember . . ." he began.

She knew he would call up the recollections—the memories of half a century—to taunt her in these final minutes. How could she tell him she wanted only to sit in silence so she would not betray her inner resentment and the rampant appre-

hension that made her want to smash the thing in the corner and cling to him forever?

"... how we met on the campus in the Old World?"

"Much better than you do," she forced laughter into her voice. "Every time you tell it you get a little further away from reality."

He had started to speak. But with her last word his face froze reflectively. *Reality* was the one word that shouldn't be mentioned now, Freda reprimanded herself. Soon he would know about reality—true, physical reality.

"We did do crazy things that day, didn't we?" He tightened his arm about her. "I shall always believe you fainted on purpose."

"I did not!" Freda objected jocularly. "I believe it must have been the heat . . . You admitted as much yourself. Remember? When I explained I had stopped to rest in the shade because I suddenly felt ill, you said you did not feel well either . . . When will you admit you came over to the tree because you saw me there?"

Karl laughed. "I will admit nothing."

He leaned over and poked the fire. "I'm afraid I made an unfortunate impression on you that day."

"I married you, didn't I?"

"But I doubted at the moment that you ever would—especially with me stopping at almost every other step to scratch my scalp and think."

"What were you thinking about, Karl?"

"I don't remember. It must have been some stupendous problem, though, to require my attention with you walking beside me for the first time."

It had seemed odd at the time, she recalled vaguely. But she had not reflected too much on observing his behavior because, as she remembered it, there was a problem of some sort weighing heavily in her mind too.

Karl solemnly studied her features. Then he grinned sheepishly. "I do remember your asking me whether we hadn't met before. That was a rather trite thing to say."

"Did I say that? I don't recall it."

THE conversation was going the way he wanted it to, she reflected. Tactfully, he was leading her away from a discussion of present considerations. With lassitude, she let herself be led.

"Freda," he said suddenly, "would you have married me if you hadn't been a—a technician yourself?"

"I rather imagine I might have," she admitted coyly. "The common ground of scientific interest, after all, wasn't a substitute for love. It was only something that added to our compatibility."

How could she speak of it all so indifferently, she asked herself, staring absently into the embers in the hearth.

"To our compatibility and to my success." He lifted her hand and kissed it while she closed her eyes and braced herself against a tremor of gnawing self-pity.

"You would have been successful without me," she said emotionlessly.

"Without you there would not have been even one Nobel Prize. Why, even in my Relativity Extension Thesis you pointed out three inconsistencies that I might have missed."

"Now, Karl, I always said you allowed me to find them—even directed me to them."

For a long while there was silence—disturbed only by the steady crackling of the fire.

"If you don't want me to go, Freda," he said suddenly, "you have only to say so."

How could a mind so brilliant, she wondered, advance the proposition in such an impossible manner? Of course she had to let him go. She could not be responsible for holding from him the knowledge that had been within his grasp for almost half a lifetime.

"You must go, Karl," she said without looking at him.

"You must believe that I shall love you always—throughout whatever form of eternity exists in the underlying reality."

"Even more than science and knowledge itself?"

He looked away from her guiltily. "Even more than science and knowledge. If this only weren't my last chance to perform the expéri-

ment. If only . . . ”

“If only you could be sure,” she completed the hesitant thought, “that you would live another seven years until the time when transition is again possible and that you would be—alone in the world then.”

“It’s not fair to put it that way, Freda,” he reproved. “As though I were waiting for you to die.”

“I know darling,” she reassured. “It’s just that you’re afraid *you* might not be alive when the next transition time arrives.”

FREDA started as the clock began striking nine-thirty. Only a half-hour left!

The fire was almost out and the candles had burned to the tips of their wicks. Karl sighed resolutely, walked across the room and snapped on the ceiling light. Then he was back at the sofa with a pad and pen in his hands.

“The outcome of the experiment,” he said, handing her the writing implements, “is only a matter of conjecture. I believe it will be best if I sign a layman’s explanation and leave it behind should there be any questions by authorities. You have access to all our notes for technical details . . . Will you put down my thoughts for me, dear?”

He clamped hands behind him and began walking aimlessly in front of the sofa. “I, Karl Bergoff, have elected to engage myself in an experiment concerning establishment of the concreteness of the space-time continuum. The effects that

the test will have on myself are not entirely known; nor can they be presumed in view of the fact there is no previous body of acquired knowledge dealing with the forces involved. However, I assume total responsibility for whatever effects result.

“Like all my associates, I am convinced that the total extent of reality consists of existence in three-dimensional space and one-dimensional time. It is my further belief, in line with the generally accepted hypotheses in this field, that all material objects are measurable only insofar as they constitute world-lines of existence both in time and space; that the world-lines of composite objects (including the human body) are comprised of interconnected world-lines of lesser objects (such as individual molecules and even sub-molecular particles).

“These world-lines, comprising the entire objective universe, are presumed to exist, in stable and predetermined form, throughout the entire extent of infinite time—in a manner similar to the intertwining of vines on a trellis. In the case of a human body, the instant which we recognize as the *now*, separating the past from the future, is merely the point at which the intellectual awareness of the individual is located in its steady progress along his world-line.

“All consciousness progresses, in step and at the same speed, along its world-lines. Therefore the instant that we call the *now* is mere-

ly the cross-section of all world-lines which is representative of the location of all consciousness in its march from the past to the future."

Karl paused, breathing heavily, and supported himself with a thin arm against the mantel for a moment. Freda's hand was tired, but she caught up with him in her writing and waited for him to continue, forcing herself not to look up at the clock.

"Displacement of a consciousness along its particular world-line," he continued, "is an effect which I believe achievable. I believe there are recurring physically propitious times at which this displacement can be effected—with the help of instrumental aids. A third requisite is a condition of intense mental awareness of the processes involved—what might be interpreted as a 'determination' to make the transition.

"The instrument involved is one which generates a field believed capable of dislodging an individual consciousness from its *now* point and displacing it, presumably, into some future point along the person's world-line. It would be apparently erroneous to assume that the displacement is pastward. Otherwise I should already be aware of having had my consciousness displaced from the universal *now* to what would be my individual *now* in the relatively past to the universal *now*.

"All data that might be required concerning the nature of the field generating instrument, the mental processes involved and the points

of theory concerned in the displacement will be found at the direction of my wife, Freda Bergoff."

Karl stood expectantly in front of the sofa while Freda completed the three-page transcription. Then he accepted the pad and pen and hastily scribbled his name at the bottom of each page.

UNABLE to restrain her eyes any longer, she glanced at the clock. At that precise moment it tolled a quarter until ten.

"Come Freda," Karl extended a hand to help her up, "we must prepare the generator."

It would be simple to say, No, Karl, it is not right; I will not allow you to leave. Understandingly, he would realize it was cruel for him to demand of his wife that she relinquish his companionship. Then he would remain with her, as he always had. And when death finally claimed him, if it should reach him before her, it would be a loss for which she had prepared herself—a natural loss.

She couldn't let him go! "Karl . . ." she began, hesitantly.

"Yes, dear?" He looked expectantly at her. And little lights of anticipation, almost childish anticipation, flashed eagerly in his eyes as he glanced impatiently at the field generator.

Freda sighed heavily. ". . . it's almost time." She forced levity into her voice and went ahead of him toward the apparatus so he

would not see the bitter resentment on her face.

Like a youngster with a new kite, she thought as she watched him make final adjustments in the positions of coils and check the exposed parts of circuits for continuity. He had always been that way—always intensely interested in his work, his experiments. But she had not minded it. For it was understood that his preoccupation with science, as overwhelming as it appeared, was but a superficiality. He had never once had to tell her that she was first in his consideration, even above the bewitching attraction that was his research.

Now his frail, bent figure darted eagerly about the aggregation of electronic parts, trembling hands lurching out now and then to touch a variable resistor or adjust a condenser.

Finally Karl completed his circuit around the apparatus and drew himself up to his proudest degree of erectness, glancing at the clock and smiling.

"With a good five minutes to spare," he laughed.

Freda shifted her weight and forced a smile. She must not let him see her small body was rigid with apprehension and foreboding.

She had not seen his hand reach out and flick the switch. The unexpected crescendo of the generator's whine jarred every nerve in her body as she stifled a gasp. The hum attained a steady pitch and miniature points of light came to

life at the ends of silvery filaments in scores of vacuum tubes.

Then, through dazed vision, she saw him standing in front of the metal chair, the extension cord of the hand switch dangling from fingers that quivered with excitement.

This was it, Freda realized, terrified. His smile, as he stood there staring at her from amid the coils that seemed to entwine about him like a Python, was farewell—the irrevocable end of fifty-four years of happiness.

Weakly, she returned his smile, halfway glad that he had chosen to say nothing, nothing that would bring on the imminent collapse which was weighing heavily upon her.

Then he was seated in the chair. His eyelids fluttered closed.

In a state of frozen terror, she watched his thumb exert pressure on the push-button switch.

The generator altered its pitch perceptibly for a fraction of a second. A visible aura of faint green light burst into existence in the vicinity of the apparatus, expanded like a balloon and collapsed.

Freda screamed.

EYES closed and her entire body trembling, she staggered backward across the room until she brushed against a chair, fell into it. Sobbing, she buried her face in her hands.

It was all over now. She had hinged all her hopes on finding the courage to stop him at the last moment. But she had not found the

courage. She had failed her own selfish interests.

Still crying, she let her hands clutch remorsefully at the coarse, wrinkled skin of her face. Then, slowly, she steadied herself and looked coldly forward at the apparatus—at Karl sitting in the chair, his head slumped against his chest.

He had said that the physical Karl Bergoff that would remain behind would be unconscious for a while. Realizing even this prediction of secondary effect had been correct, she was only convinced further that he could not have been wrong in his overall hypothesis.

Listlessly, she rose again and walked to the apparatus, stood staring down at the—the object that rested limply in the chair.

Was it her husband? Was it Karl Bergoff? Would it be sane? How would the physical object that represented the *now* point of his world-line react when it had no underlying conscious awareness beneath its surface? Where was the true inner awareness that represented her husband? How far had it been displaced into the future? Or had it gone into the past?

But perhaps the experiment hadn't worked at all. She clutched hopefully at the possibility.

Then she sighed and all the hope left her again. There would be no way of ever finding out whether the experiment had been a success. Karl himself had said so. For the material object that was the *now* point of Karl's world-line would continue

to exist and react as though nothing at all had happened — would even be at a loss to explain whether the experiment had worked.

For the body of Karl Bergoff must still go through, until its death, whatever physical actions had been laid out for it along its world-line.

Unrestrained sobs seized her again as the conviction entrenched itself that she could never know whether she was living with what was both physically and spiritually her husband or just a hollow, animated doll devoid of true awareness.

It was a horrifying thought—this living with a mannequin who would actually be nothing but an inanimate object masquerading in the guise of sentient, intellectual existence.

Karl stirred suddenly.

The switch fell from his hand.

He looked up abruptly, rose.

"You see, Freda," he spread his hands. "I told you there would be nothing to it."

Uneasily, she backed away.

"Please do not be distraught, darling," he implored. "It's just as though no experiment were performed at all."

His intended reassurance had no soothing effect.

"Really, Freda," he insisted, "nothing has changed. Please believe that. Nothing that can be detected. Even if my awareness of consciousness has gone somewhere else, there is no way to establish that the transition has occurred. So nothing should be changed between you and

—and me."

She knew he had started to use some word or phrase other than *me*. Had he started to refer to himself as the *inanimate imposter that might be masquerading as me?*

"Come, darling," he invited. "Let us have another drink of wine. We will celebrate the end of the experiment. Tomorrow I shall dismantle the apparatus."

She nudged herself mentally. That was a clue! Or, rather, it might be a clue. If the real, underlying intelligence of Karl were actually before her, he would be regretting the fact that the experiment had not succeeded. Therefore it must be a flesh and blood robot. For only an imposter would be satisfied with a hypothesis that had proved false.

No—again she might be wrong! It might be that Karl realized an ordeal for her was over; that he was actually happy—the experiment had failed; that he had not really wanted to leave her in the first place.

She bit her lips. How mixed up she was! Like the floundering search for absolute motion in a relative universé, there was simply no way of telling whether the thing before her was actually Karl. His reactions were quite normal. But that was how they were expected to be, since he would still be following his world-line, even after the experiment.

How could she be sure, she demanded of herself again, reluctant to relinquish the effort to learn what was now the most vital information in her life.

THERE WAS A WAY!

She realized that with a suddenness which brought a gasp to her throat . . . She could find out! She could learn whether the real Karl Bergoff was in his room with her!

Not only did the field generated by the apparatus permit displacement of conscious awareness, but also, according to the theory, it resulted in a physical distortion in an individual's world-line within the limited range of the field. The distortion was an effect of both the electromagnetic forces and the individual's true free will.

In her present existence, Freda knew, she was an animated doll, aware of what she was doing, but unaware that her actions were predetermined in the matrix of world-lines.

If, within the range of the still functioning apparatus, she could impose her basic free will on her motions, her world-line would be distorted in the time-space continuum in the immediate vicinity of the *now*. If Karl's underlying consciousness had already been displaced to some other *now*, the reactions of his body in the room would continue to be in conformity with his undistorted world-line. And she would be able to observe whether Karl were reacting to her indeterministic actions or to the motions she would be going through if she were, instead, following the predetermined course of her normal world-line.

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If Karl acted irrationally, incompatibly with her actions, then she would know the transition had been accomplished. She would know the spark of intelligent awareness which was Karl was somewhere else!

Karl had returned to the table and was rotating the wine bottle in its bath of cracked ice.

Trembling, Freda crossed silently to the apparatus, reached in between a coil and a rod, and withdrew the activating switch, depressing its button with her finger.

The faint aura enveloped the assortment of coils and other parts, its fringe area reaching out to touch her and set up a slight tingling in her skin.

Suddenly frustration bored into her mind again. How could she fight predeterminism? How could she look upon her present test of Karl's status as a rational test? If Karl's hypothesis were true at all, where could she have gotten the free will to conceive of the plan of thwarting predeterminism by exposing herself to the influence of the field?

But again her reasoning reversed itself. She laughed inwardly. By looking at it subjectively, she was imagining that the objective world was in a conspiracy to trick her—to prevent her from discovering true free will and exerting it. Possibly—probably—it was not that way at all. The infinite, eternal universe of world-lines would not, could not, have the personal disposition to care whether the physical object that

was Freda Bergoff managed, for a few seconds, to react to a suddenly freed will. Perhaps even this brief escapade of illusionary free will was but part of the gyrations of her world-line.

Calming herself while she stood in the weak fringe area of the barely perceptible aura, she summoned the test.

"KARL!" she called.

There was no answer. She shouted louder.

Still he gave no indication that he heard.

Indecisively, she remained in her position, still depressing the switch in her hand.

Finally he turned around, a bottle in one hand and two long-stemmed glasses in the other.

He walked over to the spot where she had stood when he last spoke with her.

"The claret will take our minds off of the experiment."

He spoke the words to the empty air!

Freda gasped. His world-line was independently in reaction with the course which hers would have followed had she not broken loose from the bonds of predeterminism!

"Of course everything's going to be all right, Freda," he said in answer to a question that hadn't been asked.

"Here," he extended the hand with the glasses, relaxed his grip on one of them.

The glass shattered with a muffled

tinkling sound on the rug. But it was apparent Karl was not aware Freda was not standing in front of him, holding the glass which he had released, presumably into her hand. He extended the bottle, tilted it.

Freda watched several ounces of the dark red liquid spill out onto the floor. Then Karl filled his own glass, placed the bottle on the table and took a sip.

"We can't have you getting a chill, darling." He reached out to pat nothing. "I'll fetch your wrap."

Then he was gone into another section of the house.

Elation flooded briefly through Freda. She had found out doubtlessly that the Karl who was consciously aware of being her husband was not here. He had gone to wherever the forces of the generated field had displaced him.

Freda would go there too! The period of possible transit extended over an hour. There was still more than a half-hour left. And she had only to sit in the chair and press the switch while she concentrated on the considerations she had heard Karl reciting aloud— innumerable times in rehearsal.

She would go into the future—or into the past—into which he had gone!

And when she left here there would still be a physical Freda in this *now*. A soulless one, perhaps—like the animated doll that was Karl—who would continue to react to the prescribed pattern of her pre-determined world-line.

Calmly, she released the switch and carried it with her as she squirmed through the barrier of thick coils, her aged body protesting the contortions that brought muscular pain.

Then, as her enthusiasm mounted, she sat in the chair and determinedly pressed down on the switch. There was the impression of a million needles pricking her skin. But suddenly the physical sensation was gone and there was only a hazy mental awareness left.

HER head swam dizzily and there was a sudden *snap*. It was as though a force had burst loose inside her brain. Abruptly she was no longer aware of being seated in the mental chair.

A cool breeze played across her cheeks, sending several displaced strands of hair brushing against her chin. She raised a hand to push them back in place.

The fingers touched soft but firm facial skin! There were no wrinkles! The flesh was not coarse, not hard with old age!

Freda was aware she was lying on her back on a comfortable mat of grass!

She pushed herself up on an elbow and opened her eyes.

For a moment her vision was clouded with a haze that seemed to be arranged in geometrical forms. The shapes she recognized as outlines of objects in the dining room.

The haze dissipated with startling rapidity, like a light fog being

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scattered before the eddies of a breeze.

Now she could see her surroundings.

She sat under a giant oak tree. All around her was a vast expanse of lawn, bordered by stately buildings.

Here she was on the university campus when only a moment ago she—or rather, the object that enclosed her point of conscious awareness of the *now*—had been climbing through a weird assortment of coils and rods.

That was an odd expression, she told herself—*point of conscious awareness of the now!* Where had she heard it? And whatever was responsible for the impression that she was entangled in an incomprehensible contraption of twisted wires and metal braces and discs?

She must have dozed here under the tree and imagined it . . . of

course, that was it! But still, the impression of being bent with age and covered with lax, wrinkled skin persisted—for a moment. Then it was gone.

Freda laughed gaily. The clock on the tower showed she was already five minutes past due at the laboratory.

Then an object in motion to her left attracted her attention and she turned in that direction.

It was Karl Bergoff, the new research assistant who worked on the third floor!

Heavens! She couldn't let him see her reclining immodestly on the grass! Not when she hadn't even met him yet!

She'd tell him she felt faint and stopped to rest—if he asked. That might not be a lie. It was as though she had fainted. After all, she didn't remember stopping to rest . . .

THE END

FANTASY FILM FLASHES

By Forrest J. Ackerman

RISING Around the Moon by Robert A. Heinlein will be “something to see in '53” on your TV sets. I watched process shooting the other day on the first episode, with ace technician Jacque Fresco in command of rocket launching, space station approach, and lunar landing. Stardrops by Morris Scott Dollens, himself busily producing the interplanetary epic, Dream of the Stars, The latter is the Dollens & Laredo

production you first read of in IMAGINATION as Far Horizons.

The horizons are widening all the time, with titles on the docket like The Rocket Men, Voyage to Venus, Amazons of Venus, Space Island, Invaders from Mars, Thunder from the Stars, Lady from Venus, Lady in Space, Lost in Space and Sky Girls.

Speaking of the wide open spaces, Lily St. Cyr the burlesqueen may

soon be seen (as much of her as the censors will permit on the screen) in *Space Girl*. Prediction: Film will be re-titled "Lily's Strip to Mars." This will start a trend, with Dagmar portraying a Dagmartian on a double feature with Marie Wilson in "My Friend Irma: The Moon or Bust!"

Going from the ridiculous to the sublime, Geo. Pal promises us a Clarke's Tour of the Solar System in the good ship "Willy Ley" when he films the International Fantasy Award winner (non-fiction) of 1951, *The Conquest of Space*. The craftsmanly hand of Chesley Bonestell will guide the extraplanetary expedition to its undoubted technicolor triumph. But before that, Pal will produce *AFTER*, the sequel to *When Worlds Collide!*

Title changes: In case you're wondering what ever became of 3000 AD, it mysteriously metamorphosed into *Captive Women*—not to be confused with *Untamed Women*, a sorry re-re-re-rehash (and I'm not stuttering) of *One Million BC*. The 3000 AD deal depicts warfare in a ruined world between the Norms, Uplanders and radioactive Mutates.

Fantasy and the sheerly fantastic have not been completely forgotten, however, as the scientific film strides into its own. *Vampire over London* will be a specDracular offering starring Bela Lugosi. The fey *Finnian's Rainbow* is to be filmed, and Thorne Smith's *Stray Lamb. Train of Events* (companion piece to the classic *Dead of Night*) . . . J. Sheridan LeFanu's *The Green Man* . . . *The Seven Souls of Clement O'Reilly* . . . *Beauty and the Devil* . . . *The Devil in the House* . . . *The Lost One* . . . *The Legend of Good Women* . . . *The Left Hand of God* . . . *Ma and Pa Kettle Go to Heaven* . . . *It Grows on Trees* . . . *Spear in the*

Sand . . . and *Curse of the Cat* are all "unusual" pictures to keep an eye open for.

1952 International Fantasy Award winner John Collier ("Fancies & Goodnights") informed me on the phone recently that he's selecting several of his off-trail tales for a "Trio" type film.

"If, one fine day, you saw the Sun fall out of the sky and all was dark but for the stars—stars you'd never seen before—would YOU know what might have happened?" Anglo author John Russell Fearn has adapted his own story of a space-warp—*Blackout*—and brought it to the screen in England with himself both as director and one of the characters. Which reminds me that many years ago a British fan group filmed Marie Corelli's immortalityarn, *The Young Diana*. Anybody know the whereabouts of the print?

The Woman Hater (Geo. Brent) will portray the predicaments of the last bachelor on earth!

CONAN Doyle's classic, *The Lost World*, is scheduled for a remake, this time in technicolor. *Destination Unknown*, by s. f. author Albert De Pina, is another prehistoric story skedded for color treatment. *Neanderthal Man* and *Land of the Mist* also come in the time-marches-backward category.

Two old Brigitte Helm starrrers, *Alraune* (made twice before) and *Atlantis* (thrice), are to be refilmed abroad. The former is the saga of the creation from a mandrake of an abysmally evil, soulless siren.

One of Ida Lupino's forthcoming projects is *Professor Hagge's Private Planet*.

Monsters are promised in 3 asorted sizes: an *Atomic Monster* (dimensions unknown; disposition, no doubt disastrous); a *Sea Monster*, 7

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feet tall with the body of a Tarzan and the head of a batrachian (that's a 4 syllable word for frog); and *The Monster from Beneath the Sea*, a real ponderous prehistorician adapted from the Bradburyarn in *Satevepost*.

The Planet Men circle the Capitol in saucers, land, clank out of their ships (they're robots) and proceed to panic, then hypnotize, the world. That's what the publicists say, anyway.

Book, radioplay and screenplay is *Space Ways* by Charles Eric Maine (graduate fan Dave McIlwain) who will have the pleasure of seeing his smash broadcast filmed in England with American importee Howard Duff heading the cast.

Crosby & Hope hit *The Road to Mars* in their forthcoming farce. TV's "Space Patrol" will be involved in one of the mad gags that have come to be part and parcel of the series. *Abbott & Costello Go to Venus* instead of Mars, as previously announced, presumably so as not to get mixed up in Hope & Crosby's picture.

KING KONG creator Merian C. Cooper has a new scientifilm up his sleeve with the mystery title *Operation X*. This may possibly be the same scientifilm as *Project X*, about an undersea civilization.

Plat-blond cinemactress Jan Sterling has come forth with the public statement that she's "crazy about science fiction pictures"; and petite-&sweet Sally Forrest (who'd be ideal for the role) after reading the bookscript on E. Everett Evans' "Little Miss Martian" series enthused, "I just loved it!" Let's get a competition going between Sally and June Allyson to play the sympathetic comedy part of the android-girl on the Red Planet.

Charles Beaumont, whose "Elegy"

appeared in *IMAGINATION* last issue, has collaborated with me on the first filmscript for the vidipicturization of the famous s. f. novel by Gardner Hunting, *THE VICARION*. As predicted in my March 1952 column on films in *IMAGINATION*, Hollywood has discovered this exciting property, which sold 16,000 copies over 25 years ago when sciencification was just making its debut—long before its present ever-pyramiding popularity—and was syndicated thruout the USA and translated extensively abroad. Producer William Schary sees *The Vicarion* as good for at least 5 years of video episodes, plus various independent film developments.

I have collaborated with producer Jack Seaman on the first 3 episodes of *Mel Petton: the Man from the Moon*, screenplays for TV based on the characters and situations created by A. E. van Vogt & E. Mayne Hull. Earth, Moon, Mars and Venus are involved.

Curt Siodmak has contacted me about his new thriller, *Crack of Doom* (nee *A-Men*). The atomic trouble-shooters have plenty to do when energy uncontrollably starts building up into matter, and the whole world is threatened with destruction! Curt's classic, *Donovan's Brain*—which has been printed and repeatedly reprinted, in magazine, hard cover, pocketbook, translations, dramatized on radio and even filmed some years back (then called, as I recall, *The Monster and the Lady*)—will be refilmed. Plan this time is to call the picture, of all things, *DONOVAN'S BRAIN!*

BILL Temple's brainchild, the wholly wonderful "Four-Sided Triangle", has, alas, degenerated from title-change *Bad Blonde* to the even worse *Girl in Trouble*. Don't

let this dissuade you, tho, from what may yet turn out to be a passable picture (I've read the tentative script) tho by no means the "All About Eve" class hit it could have been.

In a Wylie move, Philip has been picked to script *Turmoil*, adapted from Lester del Rey's never-to-be-forgotten "Nerves". Pat ("Just for You") Duggan is to produce this one for Paramount, making it a bit more futuristic in the process than the original story.

Fritz Lang, veteran director of scientifilms (*Metropolis*, *Girl in the Moon*, et al), has expressed interest in such stories as "The Machine to Kill", "Slan", "The Weird Shadow Over Innsmouth" . . . and "Metropolis"!

Darryl Zanuck will do a big budget technicolor opus entitled *The Face of the Deep*, a Curt Siodmak original on which Bradbury is later expected to collaborate. There is some possibility of Bradbury's "Martian Chronicles" becoming an MG-Movie.

Stuart J. ("Children of the Chronotron") Byrne has been selected over numerous candidates as senior script-writer for the adult science fiction video show, *Report to Earth*. Versatile, inventive Byrne will devise many of the episodes himself, others will be adapted from well-known stf yarns. Among the stories under consideration for possible incorporation into the series are "Shadow on the Moon" by Joe Gibson, "Brother" by Frank Quattrocchi, "The Question" by Ralph Carghill (Jean Cox) "The Betrayers" by Gene Hunter, and "The Eternal Eve" by John Wyndham.

Ted Sturgeon's *A God in a Garden* is being telefilmed.

1949's Nobel Award in Literature winner, Wm. Faulkner, reportedly

has a plot about a planeteer who comes to Earth from a super-civilization to advise us on vital matters, with Howard Hawks interested.

Busy author, anthologist and book editor Ken Crossen has yet found time to collaborate on an original scientifilm script called "Barrier to the Stars". Fritz Blocki has prepared a screen treatment called "Five Among the Stars"; Rip Van Ronkel, the *Destination Moon* collaborator, has an excellent one on the subject of flying saucers; and Adele Comandini has prepared a clever screen story in "Venus Calling". "The Image and the Likeness" has been turned into a cine-synopsis by Malcolm Douglas MacDonald.

"Johnny Black," Sprague de Camp's talking bear, is being considered as a possible rival for "Francis."

"The Circus of Dr. Lao", no less, is being contemplated as a Broadway play, and possibilities are seen in "The Four-Sided Triangle" up north of the border for a Canadian stage offering. In Hollywood, *The Maid and the Martian*, starring the author of *Space Patrol*, is winning audiences.

Atom Outpost . . . *The Gamma People* (with Peter Lorre) . . . *Morning Star* . . . by John Spencer Carr . . . *Tomorrow* (Sylvia Richards) . . . *Invasion, USA* . . . *Plague* (Hubbard) . . . *Dead Planet* . . . *What Mad Universe* (Fredric Brown) . . . *Within the Volcano* . . . *Miss 2000 AD* . . . *The Twonky* (Kuttner) . . . *Penguin Island* . . . *The World's Delight* . . . *I Captured the Sun* (de Pina) . . . *Run for the Hills* . . . *No Place to Hide*—soon there will literally be no place to hide from the flood of science fiction and fantasy fare. (Not that most of us will want to miss a one, from the topnotchers down to the "only fair.")

See you under the marquee.



Conducted by Mari Wolf

HERE in our living room this evening I have trapped a fan-turned-writer. The bait was dinner and beer, mainly beer. So now that he's convivial, I'm going to interview him for you.

Chad Oliver—whom I am sure needs no introduction from me, is a transplanted Texan, although born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1928. He moved to Texas in 1944, took his BA and MA at the University of Texas, majoring in English and minoring in anthropology. Now he's here in Los Angeles working toward his Ph.D. in anthropology at UCLA.

He's been writing professionally since 1950, when Tony Boucher bought *The Boy Next Door*. Favorite stories: *Blood's a Rover*, *The Life Game*, *The Ant and the Eye*. Book published 1952: *Mists of Dawn*, from Winston.

And now, on to our interview . . .

Me: What is your name?

Chad: Chad. (Short for Symmes Chadwick Oliver. I also write under the names of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells.)

Me: Did you become interested in

science fiction because you're an anthropologist or vice versa?

Chad: Inasmuch as I began reading science fiction when I was fifteen years old, and didn't invent a time machine until some time later, I suppose that the science fiction would have to come first in this particular sequence. In all seriousness, I do think that my early interest in science fiction—occupied as it was and is with problems of inter-cultural contacts and Man with a capital 'M'—at the very least set me to thinking along lines that were later to lead to an interest in anthropology, which is, after all, usually defined—with charmingly Reader's Digestian simplicity—as the 'Science of Man'. (Gad, what a sentence.) In other words, the answer is vice versa.

Me: Here's the standard question. How did you first become interested in science fiction? And were you ever really active as a fan? I remember reading your letters to the editors way back when . . .

Chad: After I completed the usual tour on duty with the Hardy Boys

and *Tom Swift and his Electric Chlorophyll Bottle*, I followed the usual pattern and went to Mars with Edgar Rice Burroughs. Shortly thereafter, I went to Florida for a year, recovering from rheumatic fever. (Those Barsoomian dead sea bottoms are rough on the nervous system.) I still remember the day when I wandered into a newsstand and, in all innocence, bought a copy of AMAZING STORIES with an ERB yarn in it—*Tiger Girl*, as I recall. (To-the uninitiated: An ERB is something like a Bem, only smaller.) I read the story and, having nothing better to do, sampled the rest. I still remember Eando Binder's *Adam Link Saves the World* and Ed Hamilton's *Treasure on Thunder Moon*. In a word, I was hooked. I promptly hopped on my bicycle, went back to the newsstand, and bought every science fiction magazine in the place. I still do, although the bicycle has become a Chevrolet.

I don't suppose I was ever what might be termed an active fan; I was technically known as a letter-hack. I occasionally still get caustic letters to the effect that my letters were better than my stories. (The same thing happened to Isaac 'Asenion' Asimov, but in his case it was true.) ((Only kidding, Isaac—but the letters were terrific.))

Me: Did you ever write for fanzines prior to taking up writing seriously?

Chad: I wrote one or two things, non-fiction and better forgotten. (One, I recall, was a defense of Captain Future. There, the ghastly secret is out.) At one time, Garvin Berry and I went so far as to put out a limited edition of a fanzine known as THE MOON PUDDLE, which featured articles by L. Sprague de Willy and Ron Double-U

Camel, II. I recall getting a very wonderful letter from Ray Bradbury about the fanzine, in which he remarked that writing for fanzines was valuable experience and often served as a stepping-stone to professional careers later. I heartily concur, and I guess that Ray himself is as good an example of this as you'll find.

Me: I understand you used to teach English at the University of Texas. What's your opinion on the literary quality of science fiction?

Chad: Well, first of all I might mention that I'm not one of those eager souls who will go to their graves valiantly insisting that everyone from Plato to Jonathan Swift were really writing science fiction in disguise. I'm rather inclined to view science fiction as the response in literature to the scientific and technological revolutions of our time, and would classify the early boys—if pressed to classify them at all—as 'forerunners'. In other words, let's confine this to science fiction as the term is usually understood.

I think that science fiction, as a literary technique, has terrific potentialities that are as yet little utilized. There have been excellent books written in the field—witness Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, Bradbury's THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES, and various little-known works like Robert 'Graves' WATCH THE NORTHWIND RISE. There have also been plenty of really good stories, I think, which are practically unique in our time because they are actually *saying* something instead of being preoccupied, in true avant-garde fashion, with a progressive wormlike retreat into the subconscious. It must be admitted, however, that most science fiction stories, because of the conditions under which they are usually writ-

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ten and published, have not yet attained the stature that they deserve. (I think, incidentally, that MADGE's Kris Neville is doing as much as anyone these days to lift science fiction up by its own bootstraps.)

Me: And what about the scientific value of science fiction?

Chad: It's difficult, of course, to generalize about such a question. What do you mean by "value", for instance? While I prefer my science fiction to be as accurate as possible factually, there are times when this isn't desirable at all. For instance, Ray Bradbury's stories often deal with a Mars that bears little or no relation to such facts as we know about that planet. It would be sheer idiocy, however, to maintain that this implies that they have no scientific merit—the ideas he is expressing, the themes he is trying to bring out, probably are a lot more "scientific" than all the detailed gadgets lumped together, blue sparks and teleporters included. (And by the way, who was the bright boy who first started the quaint theory that there is no place for emotion in science? I would think, personally, that *any* statement about society, if it is to be taken seriously at all, must recognize the importance and desirability of what we loosely term "emotion", at least in certain spheres of activity. We are not, after all, robots.)

In the field of the social sciences with which I am most familiar, I think the ideas in the stories range all the way from absurd to quite plausible, and back again. It is too much to expect that every writer who spins a yarn with a sociologist in it should take a Ph.D. in the subject first—and on the other hand, it doesn't seem too unreasonable to expect him to check through a freshman textbook before he takes off in-

to the thin air of speculation. The important thing, though, is that the ideas are *there*, and are discussed or implied in the story. We are writing stories, after all, and not treatises on abstract theory. If the stories do nothing else than convey a vague impression that scientists are not *all* quaint little chaps in baggy tweeds and bifocals, who are too busy with mathematical formulae to ever respond to so esoteric a phenomenon as sex, they have done their bit.

Me: That reminds me of something I once read in a fanzine about scientists. (Luckily I don't remember which fanzine—it was quite some time ago.) According to the article, scientists are all (1): thin, (2) nervous and highly introverted, (3) completely disinterested in athletics, exercise, or sweater girls . . .

Chad: Well, I rather think that's like saying, "All billiard players are short, fat sex fiends." A scientist is someone who works in a scientific field that seeks to determine truth through objective techniques. You'll find all types of scientists, just like you'll find all kinds of lawyers or doctors or Indian chiefs. As for myself:

(1) I'm six foot three and weigh two hundred pounds. My wife says I'm too fat, but I don't believe her.

(2) I have been both. I have also been known to be neither.

(3) I am an ex-football player. I climbed mountains all summer in Mexico on an archeology field school. I'm not particularly interested in sweater girls—I just like girls . . .

Me: One more question. Have you noticed any difference in attitude toward, or approach to, anthropological or sociological problems between science fiction readers and non-science-fiction readers?

Chad: That depends, first of all,

upon what you mean by "anthropological or sociological problems." Obviously, the specialist problems of any science aren't usually discussed at all by non-specialists, science-fiction readers or no. It's like asking, "Do you find any significant differences between science fiction readers and non-science-fiction readers in their reactions to the problems raised by Piltdown Man?"

Having been sufficiently boorish and pseudo-erudite, I will now answer the question. (Applause.) By and large I find that science fiction readers, exposed as they have been—however imperfectly—to scientific theories of objectivity and what they imply, are inclined to have very intelligent and well-reasoned ideas about such anthropological and sociological problems as they are familiar with.

I am quite seriously interested in what the effect may be on the world at large of a generation raised on the ideas tossed around in science fiction, as opposed to, say, a generation brought up on six-gun stories. It is even remotely conceivable—I'm an idealist at heart—that it may dawn upon some people, somewhere, that atom bombs aren't solutions to problems at all, and that there are other solutions, and better solutions, that might be utilized prior to the Last Movement of the Vaporization Symphony, by H. Sapiens . . .

* * *

And with that, there didn't seem to be anything left to ask. Or anything else to add except, "thanks, Chad." And I know it will be thanks from a lot of readers, too.

Now for the fanzines.

* * *

First off, there's more information from Orville Mosher about PROJECT FAN CLUB. He sends me a copy of the letter and ques-

tionnaire that he has been sending out to fan clubs, also a copy of Marian Cox's reply about her new all-femme club, the Fanettes. The questions cover just about every conceivable phase of fan activity; and once Mosher, along with co-editors Shelby Vick, Dick Clarkson, and Nan Gerding have received and tabulated the answers from groups all over the country, their intended booklet, *How to Form a Science Fiction Club*, should be invaluable to all fans.

To quote from Orville's letter: "We plan to compile this information and print it in booklet form with the hope that it will be of benefit to fan everywhere — especially those interested in forming their own sf and f groups. It would also be of great benefit to groups already formed. Actually we would like to eventually present a full history of fan organizations, past and present . . . We would like to spend at least a year and half of research on this project so that the finished product will be as comprehensive and correct as we can make it. Any aid you can give us will certainly be appreciated . . ."

So for any of you clubs that haven't been contacted, write in to Orville for a copy of his questionnaire. You'll have fun answering it, telling where you meet, how often, whether you're a formal or an informal club, how new members are welcomed, etc. And if you want to start a club, but don't know much about organizing one, the questionnaire alone ought to give you some good pointers.

Orville Mosher's address is 1728 Mayfair, Emporia, Kansas.

* * *

QUANDRY: Lee Hoffman, 101 Wagner St., Savannah, Ga. Quandry already has more subscriptions than

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it can handle—which certainly isn't surprising considering it's just about tops as a fanzine, in my opinion anyway. (And in the opinion of all the people who've boosted the subscription list to astronomical proportions.) Anyway, I guess you can't subscribe now, but maybe you can wheedle the opportunity to buy the issues covering the Convention from Lee . . .

For instance, in issue 23 there's Rich Elsberry's "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Con," which manages to name-drop (in a scrambled, Besterish fashion) just about every fan name worth dropping. It's all about a murder—Lee's—and various fan reactions to it, and maybe it wouldn't be so funny to those who've never seen Bloch, Tucker, Boggs, and Co. in action. There's also "The Truth and the Consequences," by Thaddeus F. Sweetbreath, wrongly known sometimes as Bob Tucker, reliving a few of the highlights, and the low-lights, of Chicago circa Labor Day Weekend, 1952.

At any rate, I hope you've had some acquaintance with Lee Hoffman (and associate editor and Irish fan Walt Willis, also of the Convention.) And Lee, why don't you start putting out unlimited editions or at least a few thousand copies? All it will take is all your time and money, and you'll make so many people happy . . .

* * *

ETRON: 25c; Chuck Taylor, 1521 Mars, Lakewood 7, Ohio. Jim Schreiber edits this most interesting fanzine put out by the Extra-Terrestrial Research Organization. In the issue I have here Andrew Cley has two good fan stories "Aquarium" and "Hungry Planet." The latter's a really grisly little piece about life in the police state of the future, after radio-activity has killed off most of the world's plants.

But it's the articles that are really different. As for me, I don't agree at all with ETRON's views on Flying Saucers, the building of the pyramids, hypnotism, or anything else I've read this issue . . . But it makes *very* interesting reading. And for any of you who believe in the Titans or atomic energy among the ancients, you'll find Etron especially intriguing.

* * *

FANTASY-TIMES: 10c; twice a month; James V. Taurasi, 137-03 32nd. Ave., Flushing 54, N.Y. Fanzines come and fanzines go, but Fantasy-Times continues its coverage of all the news in the science fiction and fantasy field. The eleventh anniversary issue is a thing of the past now—eleven years of news, articles, debates, reviews. (The magazine *has* changed, but if anything it's better than ever.)

It was quite an anniversary issue, too. Coverage of the Tenth World Science Fiction Convention in Chicago with its estimated 1050 fans in attendance. Coverage of the voting that gives the Eleventh Convention to Philadelphia next year. (And if you can possibly make it to the Convention, don't miss it.) Plus coverage of the more week-to-week news—new magazines entering the field, news reports from abroad, etc.

I only hope I get to read the Twentieth Anniversary Issue of Fandom's newspaper, Fantasy-Times.

* * *

THE CARTOONZINE: 5c; monthly; Marian Cox, 79th. A.B. Sq., Sioux City, Iowa. If you like cartoons at all, send in your nickel and get a few chuckles, because obviously you like science fiction and fantasy or you wouldn't be reading this. And now there's a fanzine devoted to s-f cartoons, some of them really hilarious to a low-brow like me, such as

the one of a man with a tail saying, "Mutation? Heck no, I was born that way . . ."

* * *

SHANGRI-LA: 25c; quarterly; Forrest J. Ackerman, 915 S. Sherbourne Dr., Los Angeles 35, Calif. Shaggy is the official publication of the Los Angeles Science Fantasy Society, and is edited alternately by the members of the board of editors. The issue I have here was put out by Eph Konigsberg, and it's a highly enjoyable one.

Of course I especially liked the lead article, "Publishing," by Rog Phillips. All prejudice aside, it's a funnybone tickling account of how editors do *not* receive the first submitted manuscript from fan Joe Greenhorn.

Shaggy now has a policy of printing no poor or average fiction. It leans toward articles, some humorous and some serious (such as Dave Fox's "The Problem of Traction") and book and magazine profiles. Then there's Freddie Curtis' account of a meeting of the WASFS, a future club scanning the past, thinking it's overhearing the discussions of a body of twentieth century scientists when it's actually overhearing a group of fans discussing the ray guns, space ships, etc. of sf stories . . .

* * *

IT: 15c; published irregularly by Bob Chambers, 990 N. 10th. St., Coos Bay, Oregon. Or you can send for your copy from the other editor, Walt Lee, 1205 S. 10th. St., also of Coos Bay.

IT has managed a real coup for its third issue—a Ray Bradbury story entitled "The Secret." It's not often now that you see ex-fan Ray between fanzine covers, but when you do you are naturally in for a treat. Especially when the tale of the aliens

coming to earth in the far, dead future has a twist ending like this one.

Robert Chambers reviews and indexes "Pogo in Comic Book Form," for all Pogo fans. And for Lovecraft fans there's David H. Keller's "Lovecraft's Astronomical Notebook." In fact, IT has something for just about everyone.

* * *

VANATIONS: bimonthly; Norman G. Browne, 13906-101A Ave., Edmonton, Alta., Canada. This fanzine is still being sold according to the PAR system—which system, if I remember correctly, means that you pay for the zine when you receive it and pay whatever you think it's worth. (I'm sure somebody will leap down my throat if I'm wrong.)

Anyway, Vanations is *definitely* one of the better zines. The cover is superb—this time by Orville Mosher. Some of the humorous articles are guaranteed to make a Bem laugh, such as Dorothy Bix's column on advice to the fanlorn. And another regular feature which lifts quotes from the prozines—"What the Censor Missed."

A well balanced magazine both serious and satirical, that I'm sure you'll like.

* * *

PACIFIC ROCKET SOCIETY BULLETIN: 428 S. Verdugo Rd., Glendale 6, Calif. A while back I wrote a review of the Bulletin for the Bulletin—and I guess that what I said there still holds. To the general, what one might call the lay-science fiction-reader, the Bulletin wouldn't be of interest. It's too technical. Its articles are far more apt to deal with one aspect of a problem than with the overall scope of the same problem.

But for those readers who are really rocket enthusiasts, and especially

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for those readers who have had enough background in mathematics and physics to follow the equations in the articles, the Bulletin would be of very great interest indeed.

It's not a fanzine. But if you're seriously interested in aeronautics you might request a copy from Freddie Curtis at the above address.

* * *

HYPEROPIA: 15c: quarterly; Robert J. Fritz, 819 Michigan Ave., Buffalo 3, N.Y. Hyperopia, the Farsighted fanzine, is the official organ of the Buffalo Fantasy League. And it certainly gives you a lot of material for your money. For example, the first issue runs Raymond Clancy's "The Old Master," a charmingly simple story about a magician in the present who has revenged himself on an enemy in the past, and who has now to make one more great experiment to seal this enemy's doom forever . . .

And the inimitable Lee Hoffman

writes "The Modern Way," a vignette of home life in the future, complete with the latest clothing styles, their unstylish followers, and a suspiciously twentieth century advertising setup.

* * *

Before I close up the BOX this month, there's a request from Paul Mittelbuscher, Sweet Springs, Missouri. He's starting a state-wide fan club, and he would appreciate it a lot if any of you Missouri readers who might be interested would drop him a line.

And remember to drop me a line, too, in the form of any fanzine you might wish me to review here. Just mail it to me, Mari Wolf, FANDORA'S BOX, IMAGINATION, P.O. Box 230, Evanston, Ill.

See you next month. And I hope I'll see you in Philadelphia next summer, at the Eleventh Annual World Science Fiction Convention.

—Mari Wolf

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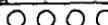
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letters



from the



Readers



FOR THE CHICON RECORD

Dear Bill:

Your editorial in the January issue of *Madge* was read by me with great interest. Needless to say, the Chicon was the best science fiction convention put on yet. But that's a pretty strong "yet". The members of the PSFS (Philadelphia Science Fiction Society) have not the slightest doubt that the Phillycon in '53 will surpass the CHICON by an enormous gap.

Contrary to your statement, the magazine coverage of the convention was a real flop. Bob Tucker, at the annual Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference, said a few words to the effect of how a couple of persons ruined the magazine coverage of the convention. All the photographic equipment was set up by the various magazines, when some fan came along, made a few dumb remarks, and out strolled *LIFE*, *LOOK*, & *TIME*. Nothing of this sort will happen at the Phillycon. Instead, the Phillycon will be the most publicized convention ever held.

Now something for the readers of *Madge*. It's a tough job when one month before the convention a few

hundred fans send in their dollars for membership. So how about getting it in early this year. For your dollar membership you'll get all the Progress Reports as they are issued. Send your dollar to: 11th World Science Fiction Convention, Box 2019, Philadelphia 3, Pa.

Hoping to see you all in '53 . . .

Lyle Kessler
2450 76th Ave.
Philadelphia 38, Pa.

*There's no question but that the recent Chicago Convention was the greatest ever held, Lyle. And we certainly hope that Philly outdoes the Chicon in every phase. After all, science fiction must continue to advance to bigger and better things each year. We're certainly behind the efforts of the Philadelphia group a hundred per cent . . . As to the magazine coverage of the Chicon, Bob Tucker has his facts a little mixed up. The truth is that through a promotion error, both *LIFE* and *LOOK* were given the go ahead on convention coverage when (as it was discovered later) neither of the two magazines would "cover" the event if the other were there. This was "big slick magazine" politics and was unfor-*

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tunate because Mark Reinsberg, the convention publicity chairman had done a nice job in getting prominent newspaper display locally and through the wire services. (It must also be added that the Chicon had radio and television publicity.) Mr. Tucker has also been instrumental in spreading another erroneous impression. In his fan magazine he published a "revised" attendance figure for the Chicon, issued supposedly by the Convention Committee. This "revised" figure was several hundred lower than the actual attendance as announced by the Chairman of Registration and presented to the Convention. For the record, no revision of this official statement has been made by either the Registration Chairman or the Convention Committee. None will be made because the "over a thousand" attendance is fact. We hope the Phillycon will post a two thousand attendance. And toward that end, if every reader interested will send for his honorary membership, the Philadelphia group will be able to achieve that goal wth

FINE McCUALEY COVER

Dear Mr. Hamling:

As I opened my copy of the January IMAGINATION I was really surprised, first of all, by the cover. I liked it very much—yet I don't know why! It is, in my opinion, one of, if not the best covers Madge has ever had. After a second look I discovered it was painted by McCauley. I immediately ran through my file of Madge and found that McCauley has had two other covers. While they were not at all like the January one they were quite good. Let's have more McCauley covers in the future.

Jan Gardner was absolutely right when he gave his opinion on reprints in Madge. Keep them out! As for serials, I would like to pick up an issue and see a story starting "First of four parts." What's wrong with serials? Well, with or without serials, IMAGINATION is still tops with me.

Richard Field
2263 Commonwealth Ave.
St. Paul 8, Minn.

McCauley has had four covers so far on Madge—the December 1950, July 1952, September 1952 and January '53. His next cover is coming up next month, the May issue (on sale March 17th) and it is the most striking cover Madge has ever had. That's saying a lot—but wait and see! wth

EDUCATORS TAKE NOTE

Dear Mr. Hamling:

Having been a particularly avid reader of science fiction for several years, I have naturally been involved time and time again in the conventional argument with non-readers who scoff at this type of reading. At first I protested vehemently, as do all of us, I suspect; later I learned to smile cryptically and walk away. Since I am a teacher of English, my choice of reading material has caused me to be looked upon with suspicion. This evening, however, I was more than pleased—and I feel you may be too—to note in a section of the very excellent magazine, *Scholastic*, in the section, *The Bookmobile*, a page of reviews of new titles of particular interest to us in the educational field, a paragraph entitled *Science Fiction Zooms*. In it, several titles are mentioned as being particularly noteworthy, prefaced by the remark, "Don't forget the new

science fiction when you recommend books to teenagers and adults." Titles included a number of prominent juvenile novels published recently in the science fiction field.

Can it be that finally, we're in? I'll admit, personally, to sneaking in a few short stories in some of my sections lately, (they were well received too!) but now it appears that my actions have been, in part, exonerated. The fact interested me greatly, and I just wanted to call it to your attention. I'm most curious to know how many others in the educational field feel likewise.

Am I a subscriber to Madge? Naturally! Excellent magazine in my opinion—my subscription bears silent witness to that!

Jerry Avery
Hillsboro, N. H.

Science fiction is making a slow but sure inroad among educators, Jerry. Perhaps the big deterrent in the past has been the "pulp" categorizing of our type of literature, due of course to the large size magazines printed on pulp paper. With the advent of slick digest magazines such as Madge, and the influx of book publishing on a large scale, the old stigma is lessening and science fiction is becoming "acceptable" wlh

THANK YOU TOO!

Dear Ed:

Thanks for a great magazine—Madge.

Thanks for the right amount of science mixed with the perfect amount of fiction.

Thanks for your terrific back covers. (They help convince people that science fiction is worthwhile.)

Thanks for the cute and clever

stf cartoons. Wish you had more! Thanks for DEEPFREEZE in the January issue. Wow! What an O'Henry ending.

Now for some questions: What are those magazines, booklets, etc., that I find listed in FANDORA'S BOX? How do I get them? They sound interesting.

By the way, if there are any teenagers in or near North Hollywood that would like to form a stf club, please contact me.

. . . Thanks too for no serials. I've finally found a magazine that doesn't have to rely on "continued next month" to get me back to the newsstands!

Esther Sonnenshine
5450 Bellingham Ave.
North Hollywood, Cal.

You'll be seeing many more cartoons per issue shortly, Esther. It's been a problem getting a sufficient quantity to run them throughout the magazine. But we're building up a pretty good supply so you'll be seeing many of them. Incidentally, we'll repeat to any of you cartoonists that Madge is looking for good stf and fantasy cartoons. We pay on acceptance and report fast—within a week. . . Those magazines you ask about are fan magazines, amateur publications put out by individual fans or fan groups. They usually are mimeographed although some are printed. You can obtain them by writing to the fan editors at the addresses listed with the reviews. Thanks for the nice letter, and write again. wlh

CHASING THE FUTURE . . .

Dear Ed:

I hate to type the usual pap about this being my first letter to an editor, but alas it's true. What brought it about was your last few

issues of Madge. Heretofore I have always preferred *Astounding*, but IMAGINATION is first now on my hit parade.

First of all let me say that I've been reading stf for some years—dating back to when stf covers drew me away from Superman comics! I started reading about atomic bombs, rockets, etc., but all that seemed far in the future — good stuff for science fiction. But one day I sat on a beach on a little island in the Pacific waiting for the sound of an atomic bomb blast to reach me. My eyes were blinded by a light that had come in a fraction of a second to change night into day. As I gazed at the issuing column of rising smoke and gases in the distance I thought to myself: it's like a page out of science fiction—the only difference was I was right in the middle of the page, living it, scared as hell. Although I've been lucky enough to see a number of blasts since then, and assigned to work with some of the more prosaic ends of the business, each one still scares the holy bejesus—when the sound catches up with the eye . . .

It gets more interesting each day, particularly when an obsolete bomber like the B-47 jet job shakes the ground under you after passing overhead so fast you didn't see it . . . Or you read in the paper where the British have installed a gadget the size of a kitchen stove with a telephone hookup that enables the prime minister to look Lord High Somebody in the eye when he wants to send a hush-hush message . . . All of which goes to prove that the present is chasing the future down the halls of stf.

Anybody know of any stf clubs in nearby Maryland or Washington

where some ideas can be kicked around over a few beers while waiting for Madge to break out in a rash on the newsstands?

N. J. Marbois HM2
Atomic Medicine Div.
Naval Medical Research Inst.
National Naval Med. Ctr.
Bethesda 14, Md.

Hold on to your hat, N. J. The next thing you hear about may be a little gadget that will pick up thought waves. What's that you were thinking? wlh

WONDERFUL, WONDERFUL...

Dear Bill Hamling:

Just picked up the January issue of that always wonderful, wonderful magazine, IMAGINATION. I have been reading it since its first issue and have been gratified to see the many improvements you have made in the past few years.

I enjoy all of your departments, with *Fandora's Box* in the lead. I didn't know very much about this great fan movement until I began reading Mari Wolf's column in every issue. I sent for a few of the fan magazines and wrote to some of your fan readers. I can't tell you how much enjoyment I have received out of actual contact with other fans.

As for the January issue, MR. SPACESHIP was by far the best story. A really unusual concept, developed with intelligence and imagination. I don't think I have ever read anything by Philip K. Dick before, but let's have more of him. DEEPFREEZE, which you featured on the cover, was to my mind only a fair story. But EARTHSMITH was excellent. Dan Galouye's SPILLTHROUGH wasn't up to the wonderful standard he set in TONIGHT THE

SKY WILL FALL in the May 1952 issue, but will do until you give us another novel by this rising new literary star. RESTRICTED TOOL is a neat, tight little story; a standard theme handled with freshness and interest. Cox's ADOLESCENTS ONLY will have to wait for another letter.

All in all the January Madge is well up in comparison to the fine issues of the past. I don't see how you get all these wonderful stories issue after issue—but keep up the good work! We fans really appreciate a swell science fiction magazine like Madge.

John F. Cook
21 Hawthorne Rd.
Bradford, Pa.

You'll find a new novel by Dan Galouye featured in the next issue of Madge, John. Believe us, THE FIST OF SHIVA is a really great sf. yarn. And the May cover is one of the most striking we've ever presented. Be sure and reserve your copy—on sale March 17th. In the meantime, thanks for the kind words, and write again . . . wlh

HERE'S TO THE FUTURE!

Dear wlh:

This magazine called Madge—it's running wild, absolutely wild! And it's also rapidly approaching the TOP of the list of science fiction magazines.

Just what is bringing about all this praise? The January issue of IMAGINATION. An issue which was literally crammed with excellent material from cover to cover.

Starting with the cover—where has THIS McCauley been keeping himself? Let's have more like this, please.

The stories—well, I'm just going to say they all were slightly ter-

rific. I couldn't find a one I didn't like, and that's something. EARTH-SMITH took top honors, and DEEPFREEZE had a shudderingly vivid ending.

IMAGINATION has come a long way since the first issue back in 1950. I wonder, had Rap continued to edit Madge, if he could have done as well as you have and are doing . . . Ray Palmer was the one to proclaim that Madge was the magazine WITH a future; you, Bill Hamling, have, and are GIVING it that future. Hope to see both you and Madge around for quite a spell.

Bobby Gene Warner
P. O. Box 63
Bessmay, Texas

Thanks for the orchids, Bob. You can rest assured we'll be doing our best to make Madge better with each issue through the years. So you can look forward to top science-fantasy reading for a long time to come wlh

HERE'S THAT MAN AGAIN . . .

Dear Mr. Hamling:

When I picked up the January issue of IMAGINATION it happened to fall open to your letter section where the following heading caught my eye: "Cusack En Garde!" Being normally egocentric I read further to see why I, or another Cusack, should be "en garde." It seems that Jack Gath, from Pennsylvania had something to say about a letter from a Miss Hanson from Hartsdale, who had commented in the October Madge on a letter I wrote last March printed in the July issue!

I pulled out my October issue, and sure enough, a Miss Hanson had commented on my letter, bless her heart. (Ordinarily I don't waste time reading the letters so I

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hadn't seen hers.) So with all this furor and turmoil being aroused I am afraid that I must write to you again.

Now, what happened since last March? Well, I am no longer a frosh at Cornell, but a sophomore. As everyone knows, this is a much different animal. A sophomore is suave, debonair, discriminating, a BMOC (Big Man On Campus); what is more important, he is a thousand times more thoughtful than the lowly freshman.

I still don't like picking up your magazine and having "fandom" shoved down my throat via your editorial, features, Pandora's Box, and that horrible letter section.

Mr. Gath says that a "majority of active fans are college students." Not quite. Here at Cornell my friends think I'm crazy because I contend science fiction is good thought-provoking light reading. Most college students are not science fiction fans nor do they read the stuff.

Apparently I am not alone in thinking you should de-emphasize "fandom". Ben Jacopetti expresses himself well on the subject. Mr. Gath and other fanatics note: I say "de-emphasize", not eliminate. *Galaxy*, *F & SF*, and *Fantastic*, three very fine magazines, get along without twelve or fourteen pages of asinine letters, and so can *Imagination*.

Mr. H., why do you hate reprints? Lots of your readers are young people who would appreciate some of the better works of the past as well as stories printed in foreign magazines outside the stf field, like *Esquire* and the *Post*.

One more comment. Spent the summer in the Land of the Midnight Sun, and while there purchased the current issues of no less

than six science fiction magazines, but no *Imagination*. Better send out an Anchorage representative right away; you're missing out on something. I suppose that if you print this letter it will set off another barrage of arguing back and forth. Actually, what's the use? We won't bring the fanatics to their senses and they won't "convert" us if we each write a thousand letters. And the more letters you print the more readers like myself will grumble. So here's hoping this is the last time I have to complain about something.

Imagination's stories are great—and keep it up!

Peter Cusack
611 E. Seneca St.
Ithaca, N. Y.

Nobody's attempting to shove fandom down your throat, Pete. Sure Madge has a fan department; it so happens there are many thousands of readers who enjoy it. That's why it's there. (We are not being out of line to presume that part of the great success of the recent World Science Fiction Convention—the attendance—was due directly to promotion that Madge and other magazines gave it via fan features.) The point to remember is that science fiction is unique in having an active fan audience. These fans are not "fanatics" as you infer, rather they are people who have a darned good hobby—science fiction—and they like to spend a lot of time with that hobby. Why don't other magazines run fan material? Part of the answer is the editors were never fans themselves; they're doing a job and that's all. We've come up from the ranks, so to speak. We understand fandom, enjoyed being one ourselves many years ago. We have a lot of fun editing Madge, being a part of sci-

ence fiction. It's not just a job to us, unlike others. Science fiction is an integral part of our life—as it is with most "active" fans. And from the ranks of fandom come most of your top science fiction editors, authors, and artists. Why attempt to stifle something that to a degree is the life blood of the field? . . . Our views on reprints

were clearly stated in our editorial in the October 1952 issue . . . The reason you failed to obtain a copy of *Madge in Anchorage, Alaska*, is simply that you got to the stands too late. *Madge* enjoys a 100% sale there and copies of each issue only last a few days on the stands. . . . That's all for this month. See you again on March 17th . . . wlh

★ Science Fiction Radio Citation ★

December 20th, 1952, IMAGINATION awarded its first annual radio citation to a CBS network science fiction program. Photo below shows award being presented during broadcast. From left: Al Bland, Program Director WBBM; William L. Hamling, editor-publisher IMAGINATION; A. Irving Grass, President Grass Noodle Company, program sponsor; Tomi Thurston, (Rhea, of cast); and Charles Flynn, (Super Noodle, Space Adventurer.) Award reads: "IMAGINATION magazine presents this award to radio station WBBM-CBS for their origination of the network radio program, SPACE ADVENTURES OF SUPER NOODLE, which is in the best tradition of science fiction."



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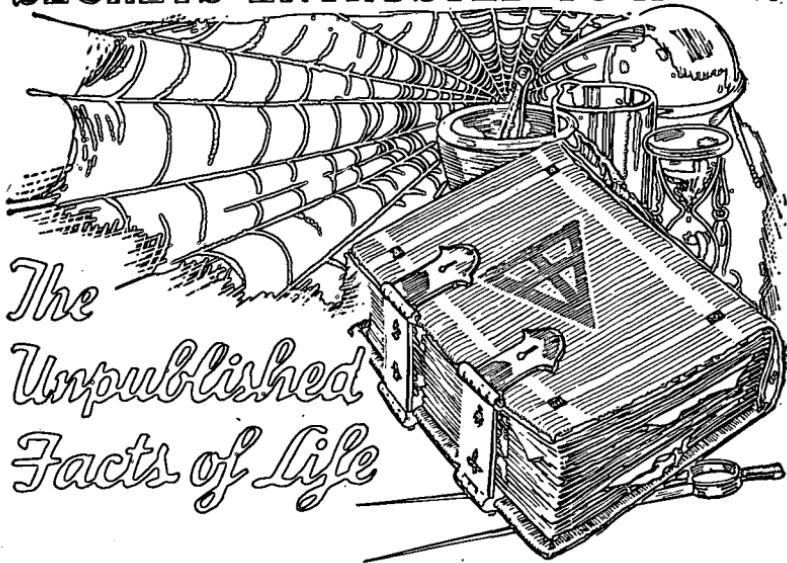
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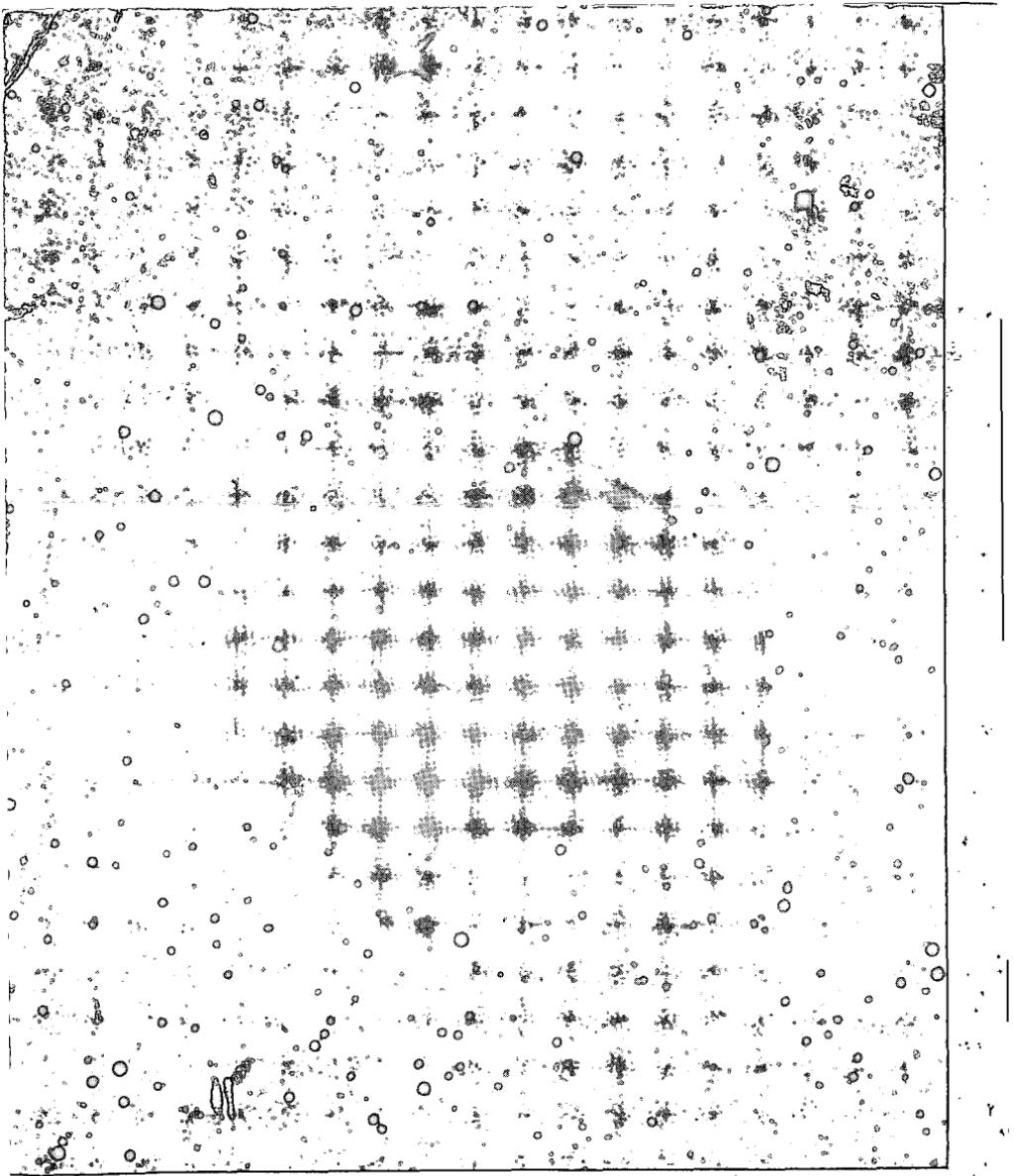
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